

# LIQUID ANTIQUITY

ΔΕΣΤΕ







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## FOREWORD

*Liquid Antiquity* was originally conceived by Brooke Holmes as part of a Princeton University initiative to create an interdisciplinary study of antiquity. After refining ideas for a project in Athens with Brooke, Polina Kosmadaki and Yorgos Tzirtzilakis came to me with the suggestion of collaborating with DESTE.

I have always been interested in the connection between ancient and contemporary art, so I reacted very positively to this idea. In fact, one of DESTE's first shows, "Cultural Geometry" (1988), juxtaposed neo-geo artworks with Cypriot pottery of the Geometric period (ca. 900-700 BCE). I knew the difficulties of mounting an exhibition that spans antiquity to the present. Inspired by Dan Friedman's radical breaking of conventions in DESTE's early publications, my solution was to reverse the normal order of things and create a book first and then migrate its contents into an exhibition. This book therefore functions as an exhibition and the exhibition will function as the book, manifesting its content in a more dynamic and accessible form while creating a dialogue across time, medium, and context.

I want to thank all the people who with their uncompromising work and effort made this complicated project possible. In particular, my heartfelt appreciation goes to Brooke, for her extensive research, which she has kindly shared with us; to Polina and Yorgos, for their invaluable contributions; to all the artists and the authors who accepted our invitation to participate in this publication; to Karen Marta, for her admirable commitment to editorial perfection; and to Takaaki Matsumoto and Amy Wilkins of Matsumoto Incorporated, whose inspiring design has contributed to the originality of this publication.

Dakis Joannou







## EDITORS' NOTE

*Liquid Antiquity* is neither an academic textbook nor a contemporary art catalogue, but an unorthodox platform that defies conventions by reinterpreting the methods through which classicism and contemporary art are traditionally presented.

This book is made up of two interweaving strands: The first is a visual essay that creates a dialogue across twenty-five hundred years by presenting images of contemporary art alternating with images from antiquity and the long history of classicism in Western visual culture. These images further transcend time and place by being reproduced on full pages without regard to temporal relationship and are not accompanied by captions, which instead can be found at the back of the book. Also at the back is a source list that highlights the resources drawn upon by the classicists, art historians, critics, cultural historians, political theorists, artists, and philosophers whose writings form the second strand of this book.

The main text is an essay exploring the notion of “liquid antiquity” through the concepts of body, time, and institution. It is followed by interviews with artists and a series of lexemes chosen and written by scholars that critically rethink the traditional language of classicism. The images accompanying the lexemes were chosen from visual material contributed by the authors in accordance with the principles of the visual essay. The collaborative development of a continuous visual strand works together with the decision to print the lexemes on parchment-colored paper. The cover, reminiscent of that of a classical lexicon, reiterates the overall attempt to create a new vocabulary that will help catalyze connections between antiquity and contemporary art.

By facilitating conversations across disciplines and eras, *Liquid Antiquity* aims to create a space in which artists and scholars can reflect on their practices while delving deeply into the past to uncover its resonance with the present. The hope is that through this unique discourse readers can forge their own critical and creative connections between antiquity and its legacies and their own perspectives on contemporary art.

Brooke Holmes and Karen Marta



## P R E F A C E

The classical inhabits the contemporary; the contemporary animates the classical. In the languid sprawl of the sleeping man in Charles Ray's sculpture *Mime* (2014), we see the classic forms of the sarcophagus and the Amazons of Hellenistic sculpture. In Alice Oswald's long poem *Memorial* (2011), we follow the similes of Homer's *Iliad* as they are, at once translated and transformed ("Then Promachus fell forgetting everything / Like when they're cutting ash poles in the hills / The treetops fall as soft as cloth"), "as if [the poem's] language . . . was still alive and kicking." The doubling of mimesis and the "as if" of the simile are variants on what has long been seen as the mechanism of classical antiquity's survival into the present: imitation. Yet classicism read only as imitation risks missing the radical dynamism of these works. What matters in these encounters between past and present is the swerve from the model, the bit of turbulence that unspools in the gap between then and now—in short, the liquidity of the relation between the classical and the contemporary.

*Liquid Antiquity* is an experiment in channeling Greek antiquity as an unpredictably generative resource for the present while resisting the petrifying powers of classicism at its most iconic. The idea of "liquid antiquity" demands that we rethink the very forms in which antiquity travels within and across different communities. The figure of liquidity functions in this book, accordingly, both as a formal principle organizing the structure of the book and as a conceptual framework: the book is structured by flows of images, voices, and ideas, while antiquity and our relationships with it are imagined in terms of fluid and hybrid bodies, nonlinear time, and the dynamic processes of dialogue and dissemination. The conceptual folds within liquid antiquity—body, time, and institution—are first explored through the title essay, which then enters into dialogue with contemporary artists, critics, theorists, and scholars through the forms of the interview and the lexeme. These conversations are embedded in a visual essay that puts the classical and the contemporary in negotiation with one another in an enactment of what the philosopher Michel Serres has called "liquid history."

The project thus aims to develop new strategies for imagining the





relationship of Greek antiquity and the present at multiple levels by bringing together resources from both the art world and the academy. The book's ten interviews engage leading contemporary artists who work with the liquid energies and formal possibilities of bodies and matter within figurative and sculptural traditions imprinted by the classical body; folds within history, the deep past, and alternative temporalities; and the institutional contexts of artmaking and exhibition as they intersect with the history of archaeology and museological practices for bringing the deep past into the present. The nodal concepts of body, time, and institution also organize the three series of lexemes. The lexicon, one of the most ancient and still one of the most familiar types of books for making sense of a past world, continues to circulate within far-flung communities as a resource for creating common ground between the past and the present without collapsing the differences between them. The lexicon created here mobilizes a range of thinkers whose voices are woven into the title essay itself, generating another series of conversations that runs through the book.

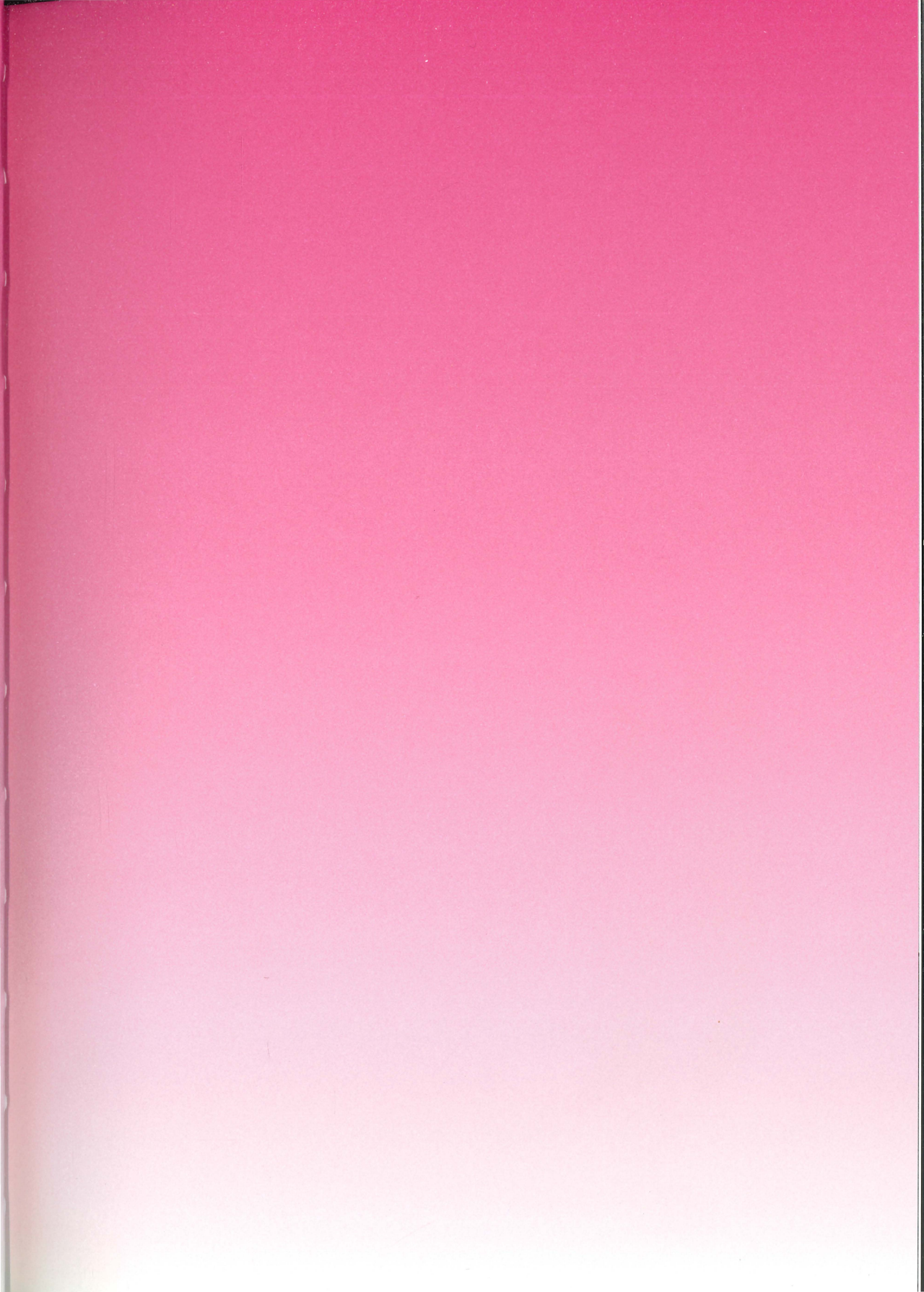
The fantasy of classicism has long been fixated on the idea of wholes that are reconstructed from fragments, and communities whose boundaries are secured by genealogical bonds with classical antiquity, often filtered through a nationalist lens. *Liquid Antiquity* works to enact different kinds of wholes and communities through an open-ended cross-fertilization between the art world, the academy, and the public at the intersection of different cultural and national traditions and multiple temporalities. The world it creates is designed to be heterogeneous, embodied, and fluid, open to reinvention in the encounter with new readers. By bringing together hybrid communities around the questions and challenges still posed by the classical past, we aim to open up new conversations about what Greek antiquity promises and what it might demand of us—and about the ways in which it has shaped and continues to shape our understanding of beauty and art, what it means to be human, and what lies beyond the human.

Brooke Holmes



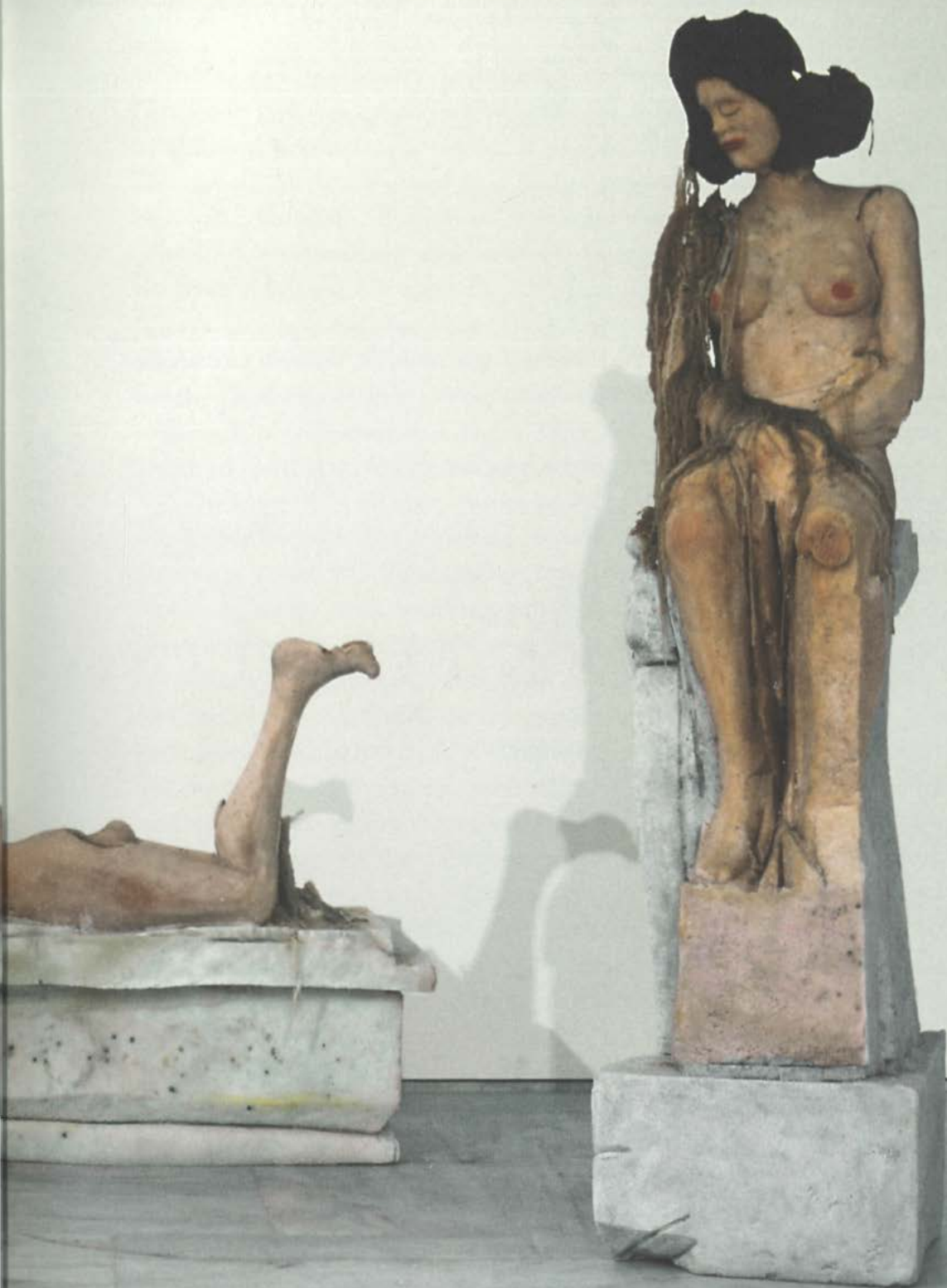












# LIQUID ANTIQUITY

Brooke Holmes

The past is slippery. Just think how hard it is to remember what happened last week, last month, last year. Now imagine that the past in question is classical antiquity. The idea of ancient Greece still feels familiar, all bright light and firm flesh. Chiseled marble youths come to mind as a template for what we were and should become; the classical colonnade materializes as a home, if only we could remember how we lived there. As our gaze fixes on the ruins of classical antiquity, it is easy to forget that we never truly knew it. What grounds us is the stabilizing illusion of classicism, the idealized image of antiquity, at once timeless and the object of permanent loss, that has governed modernity's relationship with ancient Greece. What would happen if the ground began to shift? If antiquity, no longer carved stone, turned liquid?

In antiquity, the spectrum of liquidity maps a realm of generative possibility but also one of radical risk and disorder. The first of the pre-Socratics, Thales of Miletus, saw in water the foundations of the entire world. In early Greek cosmology and biology, life was often imagined to emerge from water. Rivers were an integral part of the social fabric of ancient communities, associated with the nurture of the young and sometimes identified as the progenitors of royal bloodlines. The decline into death, conversely, was viewed as the withering of the body, the slow seep of liquid (ancient etymologies read the very name of the healing god Asclepius as the resistance to what is *sklēros*, hard, dry, and unyielding). Yet the fluid dynamics of bodies also posed a constant threat to order and well-being, especially with the rise of humoral medicine in the fifth century BCE. Excess fluidity defined the bodies of women as less articulated than the ideal male body. To participate in "wetness" (*to hygron*) was to be porous to the world and to time as the condition of life at the cost of form. Proteus, impossible to pin down, is a god of rivers and sea.

If liquidity courses through us, it also surrounds us. The sea was a topography of channels in the ancient Mediterranean world, enabling relations between cities, between elites, and between markets. It was also notorious for unpredictable turbulence, the syntax of terrestrial life dissolving in the maelstrom of *tychē*. In Hesiod's *Works and Days*, written in the eighth century BCE, seafaring is the polar opposite of farming—that is, a way of life governed by the periodicities of the seasons and the skies.



On the waves, you could make a fortune one day and have it swallowed up the next. A watery grave was a horrific fate. A body lost to the sea trades the final recuperation into social order promised by burial for the eat-and-be-eaten world of the nonhuman. In the *Odyssey's* tumultuous Book Twelve, Circe speaks of bodies washed together with the wreckage of ships in the waters around the deadly Clashing Rocks, anticipating a scene some lines later when a storm surge sent by Zeus tosses Odysseus' companions around their splintering vessel like sea crows bouncing in the surf. Odysseus ends the book alone, hanging over Charybdis from the branch of a fig tree "like a bat," staring into the vortex.

But the restless eddying of water was not all bad. Stasis was no less feared. The democratic politics of ancient Athens thrived on the circulation of power by lot and the currency of words. From bitter contestations on the tragic stage to Socrates' dialogic practice in the agora to the wildly popular debates of the sophists, language flowed in the streets of the ancient city and spilled over its boundaries, disseminating ideas farther and farther afield. The written word is famously dismissed by Socrates in Plato's *Phaedrus* as dry and sterile, incapable of sustaining the animated exchanges that are the lifeblood of philosophy. Nevertheless, texts were the most important vehicle for the diffusion of ideas beyond Athens and the other major points of cultural production in the fifth and fourth centuries BCE. The history of the text in antiquity oscillates between the accumulation and preservation of books as an unparalleled form of cultural capital and their release back into channels of communication, reproduction, and exchange.

The figure of liquidity courses through the ancient Greek imaginary unpredictably, mapping a complex terrain. If, however, we move into modern discourses about classical antiquity and, in particular, about the past's survival into the present, its meanings cluster under the sign of loss. Indeed, liquidity haunts classicism. Water erodes and erases. Already in Homer's *Iliad*, the river Scamander, swollen by rain, washes away the massive burial mound built by the Achaeans in the waning years of the Trojan War, returning the landscape to what it was before the violence of history. The liquid is the enemy of the monument, the destroyer of memory, the scourge of the library. Moisture corrupts texts and rots books. The reason that the majority of new textual finds from









Greco-Roman antiquity come from Egypt is because its desert sand is one of the few environments sufficiently dry to preserve papyri.

Liquidity also implies the market, and the market in antiquities is always black. The modern museum is, in theory, the corrective to capitalism's pernicious liquidity, withdrawing objects from circulation in the name of preserving past treasures for future generations. But trust in the museum's aloofness from markets, especially the market in antiquities, has been severely compromised in recent years in the wake of scandals about provenance. Trust in the museum's capacity to protect has been shaken, too, by the looting of antiquities in Iraq and Syria over the past decade. Liquidity is an acute threat to how we imagine both the origins of the museum and its future.

In the broadest sense, the liquid raises the specter of the loss of antiquity at its most foundational. In the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman's well-known critique, modernity is liquid in its refusal of stable values and in its embrace of rootlessness, which leads to economic insecurity, mass migration, and a climate in turmoil. The liquidity of modernity on this reading stands against the stability of what came before, and it is this once-solid world that offers the hope of a steadier future. It matters little, then, whether the model offered by the past is overwhelmed by the chaos of the present or whether past cultures are revealed to have suffered disturbances as intense as those we are living through now. In the end, the outcome looks equally dystopian. Antiquity turned liquid offers the moderns no nostalgia, no redemption.

If, however, we trust in the very liquidity of the figure of liquidity itself, diving back into its ancient complexity, the challenge is no longer to protect against loss. It is, rather, to ask all over again *what we are preserving, in what forms, and why*. These are the questions that motivate *Liquid Antiquity*. Multiform and many-voiced, the project enlists the figure of liquidity to channel new tributaries into ancient ideas, texts, and artifacts as springs of provocation and value in the present. It explores, too, the sprawling legacies of classicism as resources for reflecting on the potential stakes in the return to antiquity and the different models we construct to bring the Greeks into the present or to push them into the past. And it invites artists to reflect on the ways in which antiquity has informed their own practices, directly and indirectly, through the

form and matter of the classical body; the creative reimagination of art history, deep time, and mythic pasts; and the museum as an institution shaped at its origins by the collection of antiquities and archaeological practice. *Liquid Antiquity* thus aims to open up a space for thinking about the institutions and technologies that have disseminated and continue to disseminate representations of antiquity to broader publics, and about the very forms in which antiquity is disseminated, together with the different versions of the *we* produced by these encounters. For one of the project's foremost aims is mapping the shifting borders of myriad communities—themselves internally heterogeneous—that have formed around and through the relationship with antiquity. Another is the enabling of new communities that are impossible to imagine in advance. The standard *we* of classicism (we Westerners, we elites, we colonizers, we Christians, we whites, we men) has long masked more fluid and unpredictable alliances generated by engagement with the Greeks. There has never been a better time to retire it.

Yet the turn to antiquity can never be innocent. The ambition of this project is not simply to ask why the Greeks matter but to do so strategically in the face of antiquity's petrification *as classical* and, indeed, in the face of antiquity's own powers of petrification. For the timeless value of classicism's objects is so much a given that these objects are always at risk of standing only as empty symbols of timelessness itself, silent rebukes to contestations over value. They are at risk of being consigned to the halls of what Paul Chan has called "chronological art"—that is, art on the side of *chronos* (the time of history, measured time, but also time that congeals into timelessness) rather than that of *kairos* (the time of the opportune moment, the time of mortality, the time of the unexpected). In contrast to chronological art, kairological art embodies "a desperate immanence, as if what is given is not good enough but will have to do"; radically contingent, it "evoke[s] the vertiginous feeling of seeing something emerge by being made and unmade at the same instant." Yet the fragmentary remains of ancient Greece and Rome are all too easily hitched to imperial aspiration, claims of cultural hegemony, fascist fantasies, a sense of moral superiority, and political conservatism. History is littered with examples that prove beyond a doubt classicism's unsettling ideological potency.







The ready appropriation of Greco-Roman antiquity for these ends can be explained in part by the double sense of the modern adjective *classical* (the Latin term *classicus* is used primarily to describe the top tax bracket in the Roman period, although it makes a lone leap into metaphor, in the second-century CE author Marcus Cornelius Fronto, to describe the uppermost stratum of authors). First, *classical* is shorthand for cultural production in ancient Greece and Rome. The period in question sometimes stretches from Homer (eighth century BCE) to the fall of Rome (fifth century CE), roughly capturing the scope of the academic discipline known in the Anglophone world as “Classics,” whose largest professional organization recently renamed itself the Society for Classical Studies. More often, narrower bands within this sea of time are determined to be classical: fifth- and early fourth-century BCE Athens and Augustan-era Rome (end of the first century BCE into the first century CE). Earlier periods are relegated to archaism and immaturity, later ones to decline and decadence.

The idea of historico-cultural conditions under which everything touched turns to gold gestures toward the second, transhistorical sense of *classic* and *classical*. Here, *classical* designates “the norm whenever a hierarchy is established or imposed,” the best and, usually, the most beautiful. The idea of a past remains no less important. What is classical is frequently seen as a model insulated from the present but available to imitation. It is in this sense that Mayan art or Renaissance painting can be called classical. But despite the transhistorical and transcultural reach of “the classical,” Greco-Roman antiquity magnetizes its power. It was in ancient Greece and Rome that the classical was first fixed. The ongoing investment in the very idea of the classical draws us back to the ancients’ monuments, their traces, their haunts, as the original models of timeless beauty and moral excellence. By the same token, it is difficult to reverse the magnetic charge, to deactivate the ideological tropes and snares of classicism in the ways we talk about “classical” antiquity—and especially in the ways we *show* it, the ways we “distribute the sensible,” in Jacques Rancière’s phrase.

It is true that the texts of the classical canon have long been privileged sites for the communication of classical values and ideals. Indeed, the revival of the language of the “classical” first occurs with

reference to ancient texts in the Renaissance. Yet classicism's charge is arguably at its strongest in its most iconic representations: rows of marble columns, muscular male nudes, artfully draped female bodies, all white, white, white. The power of iconic classicism is paradoxically intensified by the increasing rarity of what was once called a classical education and of the encounter with texts in the original languages. The study of ancient Greek and Latin, which formed part of the elite education even of scientists and mathematicians well into the twentieth century, is now a niche concern. But instead of weakening the grip of classicism, waning familiarity with "the classics" seems to have only strengthened its ideological power, as Salvatore Settis has suggested. It is as if classicism stripped down to its most iconic forms (the Venus de Milo, the Apollo Belvedere) is the cockroach that has survived the near-apocalyptic demise of the classical education. The force of iconic classicism is further intensified by the nature of the visual itself, with its two-pronged promise of unmediated access and objective contemplation. However much the raw power of classicism's most statuesque symbols is disciplined in the sober spaces of the museum or the classroom by the addition of wall text or the restoration of color or the fleshing-out of history, then, it has a way of reasserting itself. Like Medusa's gaze, it stuns the viewer, with a beauty that cannot not be ideological.

It is precisely the petrifying power of classicism and the constraints imposed by its most iconic forms that motivate the choice of liquidity as both a formal principle and a conceptual frame for imagining antiquity and our relationship to it. The figure of liquidity as a conceptual frame is navigated through three broad but interrelated ideas: body, time, and institution. Each has been chosen as a point of strategic engagement with classicism at its most entrenched. The classical *body* has of course long been a vehicle for naturalizing the ideals of symmetry, order, masculinity, and self-mastery. In antiquity, as we saw earlier, liquidity both animates organic bodies and submerges them in a fluid dynamics of intake and output, where they participate in a ceaseless going "to and fro," as Plato often says, from which only the soul is exempted. In contrast to the classical body, the liquid body is one tapped into vital forces that are not easily disciplined and into the possibilities of new assemblages and contingent structures. The unforeseeable potentialities









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of the liquid body are aligned, especially in Aristotle, with matter and the maternal contributions to generation. They thus point to alternatives to the dominant models of imagining the *temporal* relationship between past and present, obsessed as these models are with tradition, heritage, and genealogy. To enter instead the imaginative space of what Michel Serres has christened “liquid history” is to engage nonlinear models of time such as fold, anachrony, and seriality, models informed by the turbulent logic of rivers and seas and the capacity of water to make connections across vast distances. The work of making connections is one way of defining the *institutions* that preserve and present the legacy of classical antiquity. What kinds of connections can be made in a book? In a gallery? What forms of attention and sense-making might flourish when the iconography of the classical enters an unruly manifold of words, ideas, and images? Is it still possible in this day and age to engage classical antiquity as malleable and unpredictably generative?

## BODY

Although its earliest associations were with biblical texts, the word *canon* is one we now associate with Greco-Roman texts, especially the corpus of texts assigned to the highest echelon of ancient literature. The Greek word *kanōn*, however, first refers to a common tool of carpenters and architects, something like a ruler. In the classical period it comes to acquire the metaphorical sense of standard, paradigm, or model. It is under this guise that it first migrates into the *longue durée* of classicism, not as a way of classifying texts but as the name of a lost treatise by the Greek sculptor Polykleitos (fl. 450–420 BCE) that seems to have elucidated the abstract principles governing his most famous statue, the Doryphoros (“spear-bearer”): symmetry, harmony, proportion, balance, order, rhythm. Like his treatise, Polykleitos’ bronze Doryphoros no longer survives. But through well-preserved Roman copies in marble, the statue still exercises a powerful influence on our perceptions of the classical body, occupying an indisputable origin point of Western art history. The idealized male figure, youthful and athletic, is a system of contrasts structured by precise ratios and dreams of equilibrium. The body is here tensed, here at ease; weight is shifted onto the right leg while the left is poised free; the left arm, in turn, bears the heft of the

spear, while the right hangs loose. The figure is not so much naked as it is the archetype of **the nude**. Already de rigueur for the standard statues of young men, *kouroi*, from the previous century, nudity will function as perhaps *the* hallmark of the classical Greek body. But whereas according to the standard art historical account, the sixth-century BCE *kouros*, with its squared posture and enigmatic smile, is an icon of **the archaic** (eventually destined to become a strategic locus of *anti-classicism*), the *Doryphoros* emblemizes the flowering of the classical period, with its full-blown commitment to naturalism.

*Naturalism* is a term frequently thrown about in attempts to pin down what is classical about the classical body. So what is at stake in nature, *physis*, in the fifth century BCE? We may gloss naturalism as “true to life.” But then what is the life of the body here that is so evidently true? Polykleitos’ fetish for symmetry is often read as a Pythagorean-inspired trust in numbers as the realm of perfection. Number, however, is not just abstract. The sculptor’s embodiment of numerical proportion reflects a widespread interest in early Greek philosophy in figuring out not just the structure but also the nature of the cosmos as well as the things within it (Plato speaks of his predecessors as pursuing an “inquiry into nature”). High on the list of these things was the human body. And the inquiry into its nature was a primary object of fifth- and fourth-century BCE medicine.

What a body is by nature could be the structure of its parts. The phrase “according to nature” (*kata physin*) occurs most often in the surgical treatises of the Hippocratic Corpus, which are concerned with setting dislocations and broken limbs so as to return the body to its “natural” form. The anatomical organization of the body is obviously a major concern for Polykleitos. Tellingly, it is in the massive anatomical compendium *On the Usefulness of Parts*, written by Galen of Pergamum, the second-century CE physician and self-proclaimed heir to Hippocrates, that we find the most citations of the sculptor’s *Canon* (for which Galen serves as one of our most important sources).

Yet nature is not only a structure or a system. It is also a dynamic force capable of maintaining structure in time, despite the body’s ceaseless exchange of matter with the outside world. That is to say, it is a force *immanent in a life*, an engine of **animism**. By Galen’s time, and in his







writings in particular, nature will have become Nature, a transindividual, demiurgic figure credited with achieving, through intelligent design (*technē*), not only the body's perfect proportions but also its capacity to sustain life. In the Hippocratic medical writings seven centuries earlier, nature is something more local—not Nature, but individual natures—and less scripted as an agent of life. Still, especially as we move into the fourth century BCE, the nature of a body emerges clearly as the force that defends life qua form against disintegration and decay. If health is defined as being “according to nature,” then it is through the flourishing of a nature that a body emanates vitality, pure life.

The perception of life and liveliness is an equally important part of what is usually meant by naturalism in Greek sculpture. As one art historian has recently written, the late-sixth-century BCE kouroi exhibit “a burgeoning naturalism . . . as if a living figure trapped inside . . . were trying to break free.” At the same time, as the embodiment of pure life, the idealized bronze or marble figure paradoxically appears to transcend life through the condition of *immortality*. The paradox of immortality is twofold. On the one hand, the transcendence of mortality can be said to proceed through the statue's faithful representation of the beautiful youth who, in dying young, stays pretty, forever suffused with the dew of life: the statue as stela. Surely the uncanny hold of so much classical statuary on our attention owes a considerable amount to this intensification of life in stone and metal. On the other hand, mortality's transcendence is secured by a repudiation of life in all its liquidity. The classical body is here the bulwark against another body that emerges in the fifth century BCE through the medical texts, a body of blood and breath, *pneuma*, but also a body of unruly fluids to be disciplined by the *technē* of the physician and the autarchy of (male) citizens: namely, the physical body.

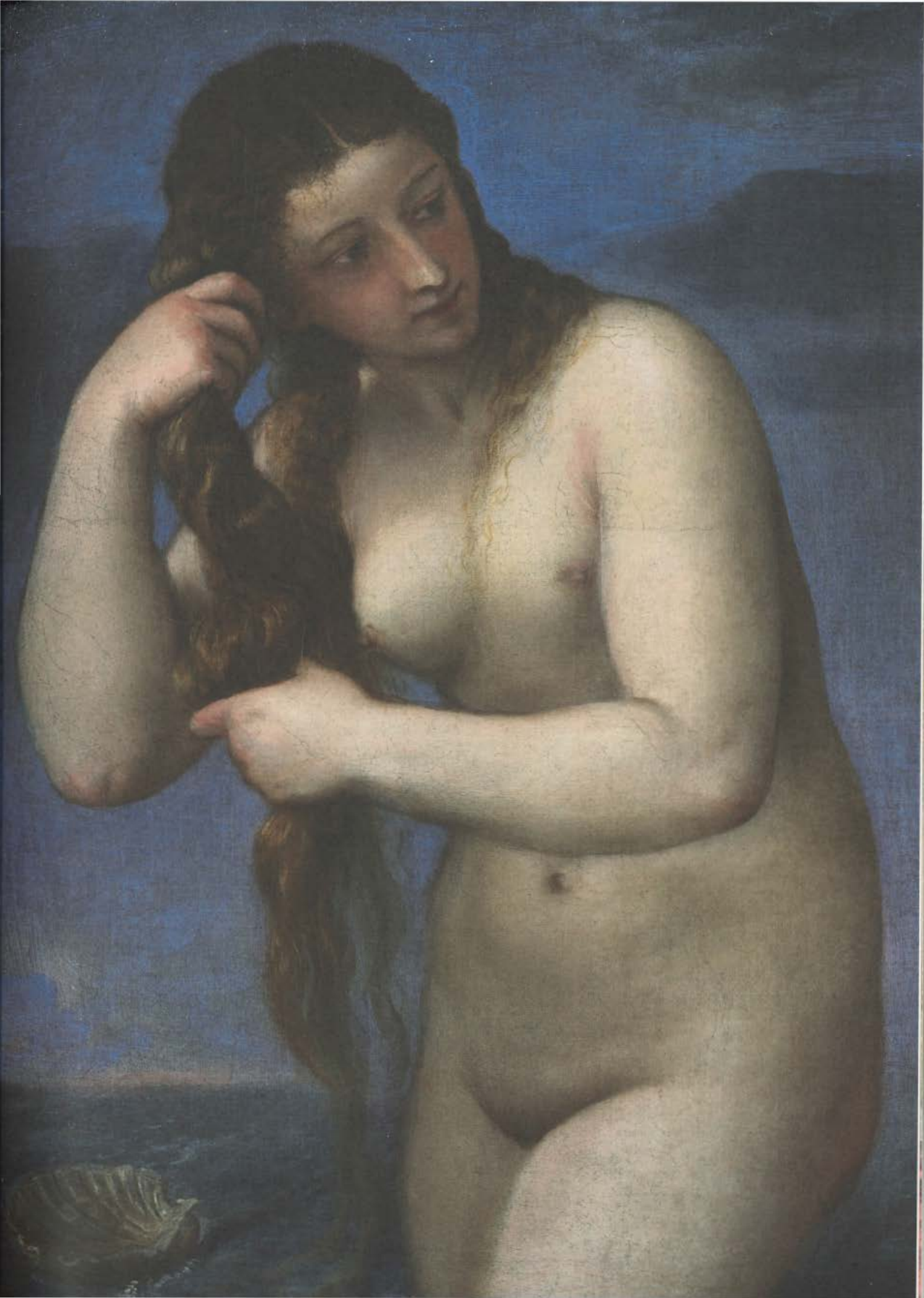
The balance and symmetry of the idealized Hippocratic body are arrived at in part through the definition of health described in many texts as an equilibrium of the fluid stuffs, or “humors,” within the body. But in this context, equilibrium is more an aspiration than a normal condition, precisely because the constituent elements of the human body and, indeed, human nature are irredeemably liquid. Although necessary to life, liquids are also at the root of the body's pathologies. In early Greek accounts of disease, harm arrives from outside, from the realm

of the gods or the daemonic. By contrast, in naturalizing medicine, the daemonic is folded within, in the unseen and largely unfelt space of the body's interior, where the humors are in constant flux. Labile beyond measure, the humors are sensitive to the slightest change in the weather, any intake of food or drink, the practices of daily life. They surge through the vaguely defined channels of the body and into its hollow spaces, trafficking in disruption. They produce a steady stream of effluvia, the waste products that are so assiduously cordoned off from the icons of classicism and the boundaries of "classical" civilization.

The growing importance of regimen and prophylactic medicine toward the end of the fifth century BCE therefore reflects the need not only to cure disease but also to stave off incipient disorder. A body's nature fights this battle, but it requires assistance, not least because embodied patients so often unwittingly abet the body's innate tendencies toward instability. If it were okay for a body to be a body, Socrates says in the *Republic*, then we would have no need for medicine. Yet while physicians develop the defensive strategies—diets, exercise routines, sexual regulations, monitoring of signs—the strategies themselves become the responsibility of patients, especially elites who have the time to protect against the unstable body through techniques of care, which Michel Foucault called the *souci de soi*.

The achievement of form at which these techniques aim finds perfect expression in the articulated body so prevalent in classical sculpture. These bodies testify to the success of one class of human beings—elite male citizens—at taming the volatile fluid dynamics of the body without tipping into the sclerosis of death, excessive dryness. But such articulation is out of reach for others. Saturated with moisture, the bodies of women can never attain the definition of the idealized male body. Whereas, according to the Hippocratic embryological writers, the male fetus requires thirty days to take shape in utero, the female needs forty-two, so steep is her struggle against watery formlessness. Because female flesh remains porous after birth, women's bodies soak up excess moisture that must be regularly purged through menstruation. In his works on generation, Aristotle denied women the capacity to pass on form since they lack the ability to concoct menstrual blood into the almost immaterial stuff of new life, seed, although coiled within











feminine generative matter is the power to disrupt the paternal line by overwhelming male seed with moisture. Many non-Greeks suffer, too, from excessive liquidity due to the damp climates in which they live. They are thus effeminized by a tenuous relationship to form and stability (the Hippocratic ethnographic treatise *Airs, Waters, Places* describes the fruit in one region as “made female” by a wet environment). But in fact all bodies bear within them a tendency toward formlessness. It is in part because the physical body enters the Greek and eventually the Western imagination as largely fluid terrain that its fate is so fraught. Plato crafts the soul as an island carved out from the sea of matter. The ideal body of sculpture can be read as another classic point of resistance to life as flux.

In the wild potentialities of liquidity lie the many deformations of the classical body: the female body and the barbarian, but also the human/nonhuman hybrids of the mythological imagination. The [centaur](#), under the name of Chiron, is the healer of an earlier age and tutor to Achilles but becomes a figure inscribed into the history of classicism as the antithesis of Athenian self-mastery, lubricated by Dionysus, on the southern metopes of the Parthenon. The [Minotaur](#), the most famous adversary of the Athenian hometown hero Theseus, is born from the bestial lust of the Cretan queen Pasiphae. On the margins of settled community, in groves and on mountains, one risks encountering Pan, horned and shaggy; or the nymphs of streams and pools, like those who coaxed Hylas into the water forever, or like Salmacis, whose desire for Hermaphroditus caused two bodies, male and female, to fuse into one; or the satyrs, companions of Bacchus. Dionysus is, in fact, the quintessential god of liquidity, lord of the *ganos* (the sheen of water, the luscious vitality of wine or rain), the avatar of infinite life (*zōē*) and succulent vegetality, as the legendary historian of religion Carl Kerényi described him. Euripides’ *Bacchae*, a paean to the god of the grape written in blood, is a riot of flows—streams of milk, honey, water, and wine sprung spontaneously from the earth; life-giving fluids dripping from the breasts of the Bacchantes into the open mouths of wolf cubs; rivers of gore. Dionysus shimmers with the fluid energies of [erōs](#), another major vector of ancient liquidity, at once turbulent and smoothly seductive.

The flows of *erōs* are indispensable to the dynamics of generation through which one age births another. In the encounter between two

fluids, sperm and menstrual blood, ancient biologists saw the organism's passage into a future beyond its own boundedness in time. Not just life but the history of life begins in liquid. How might we imagine antiquity's future and our own ancient history under the sign of liquidity?

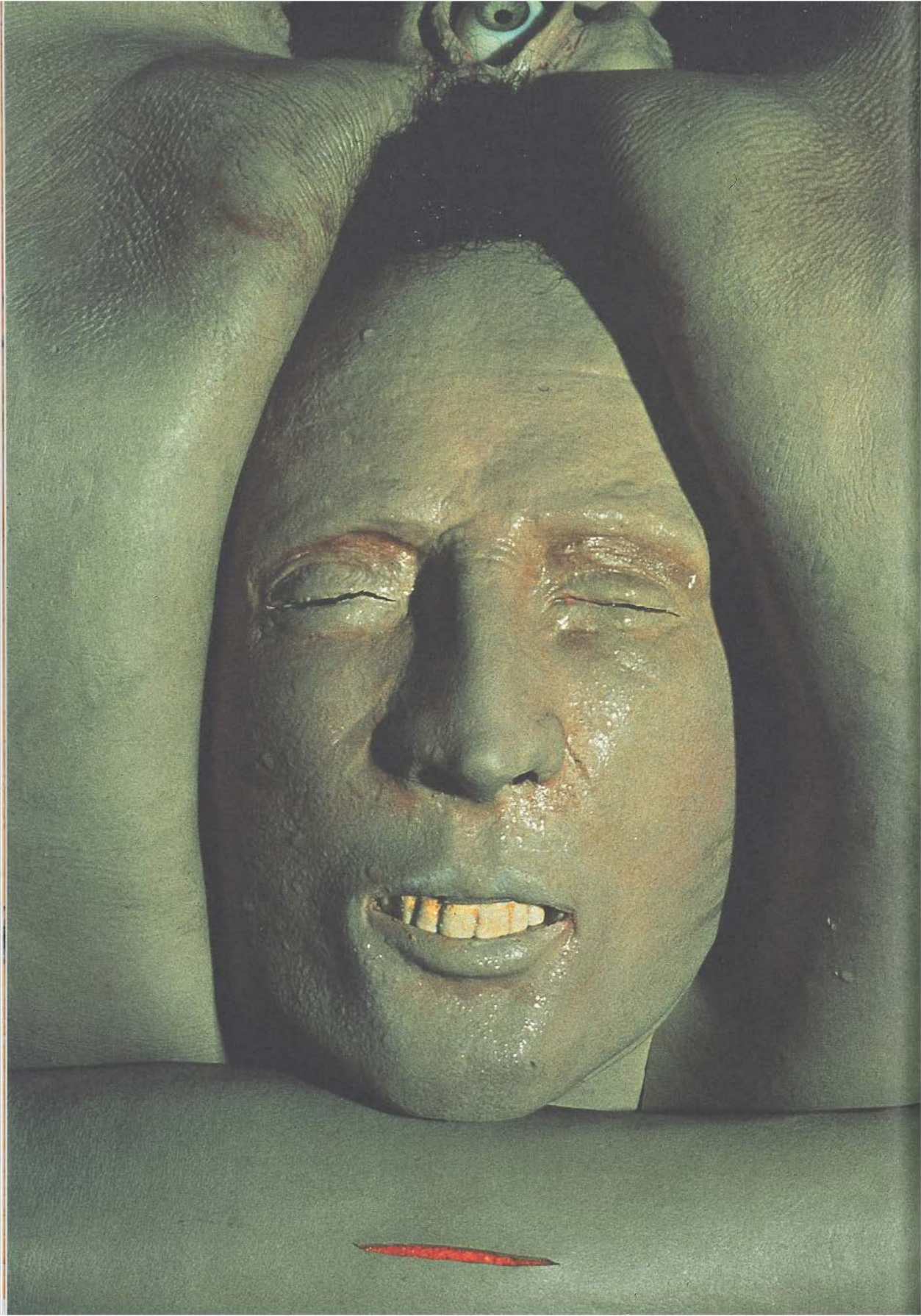
## T I M E

What is our relationship to those who have come before us? Insofar as it is a phenomenon of the eighteenth century and beyond, classicism is founded on the recognition of a rupture between the time of the present and that of "the ancients." Yet a sense of distance already haunts the relation to past generations in the Homeric epics, where men of an earlier age lifted boulders without effort and communed with the gods. With the perception of distance from an idealized past comes the longing for intimacy, and intimacy is often sought through the resources of genealogy. Genealogy is literally an accounting of the *genos*, the race or the tribe. In Homer, the recounting of genealogy establishes heroic pedigree and lays the groundwork for elite friendships in the here and now by reaching back to the bonds of fathers, to one another and to their progeny. The continuity of the paternal line is paramount here, its disruption always a latent threat. In Hesiod, one of the signs of cosmic order is the mirroring of fathers in their sons, while disorder is signaled by a lack of resemblance across generations. Hesiod's paradigm echoes centuries later in Aristotle's embryology, where disturbance from the mother's matter produces perversions in nature: girls and other monstrosities. Whether or not there were precedents for matrilineal societies in the ancient Mediterranean and Near East, by the time of the classical era the rule is matri-nonlinearity, awash in the errancy of liquids.

For the moderns, a genealogy entrusted to fathers and sons remains a privileged model for bridging the gap with antiquity. During the nineteenth century, the language of genealogy is entangled in nationalist narratives of origin and heritage and deeply embedded, too, in philology's newly "scientific" and systematic approaches, which are associated above all with the German scholar Karl Lachmann and his method of building the family trees (*stemmata*) of extant manuscripts in order to reconstruct lost urtexts. Yet other relationships to the ancients were also available. The Greeks could be seen, for example, as lost lovers, as in the famously







ardent closing paragraph of Johann Joachim Winckelmann's epoch-making *History of Ancient Art* (1764), which still stalks our strategies for navigating between the historian's erotic attachments to the past and cool [neutrality](#). Alternatively, they could be imagined, especially under the influence of Romanticism, as children or primitives in a developmental narrative leading to the present, a teleological account still powerfully operative in mid-twentieth-century classics such as Bruno Snell's *Discovery of the Mind*. The various stories of origin and descent oriented around the Greeks come under increasing pressure at the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth from new narratives of human evolution and geological time. The [fossil](#) emerges as a rival to the ruin. Yet true to the language of heritage and tradition, the classical continues to be figured in the twenty-first century as a treasure, the "family jewels," to be handed down, generation after generation, to its rightful heirs so that the relationship with an ancestral antiquity is never lost, even if that means the [debt](#) to the ancestors will never be repaid.

Nevertheless, the possibility of folds and discontinuities, of queer temporalities and unexpected futures, remains latent in modern concepts of genealogy and tradition. Laying claim to Nietzsche's radical rethinking of genealogy, Foucault sought to develop forms of historical practice that could expose the ways in which the present is determined by trajectories of power in the past and, as a result, spur the imagination of alternative worlds. Foucault concentrated primarily on the emergent formations of modernity over the course of his career. But in the last two volumes of his *History of Sexuality*, unfinished at the time of his death in 1984, he swerved from the path he had laid out in the first volume, which is primarily focused on the nineteenth century, toward Greco-Roman antiquity. The reason, as he described it, was that he needed to go deeper in time to uncover the processes by which individuals first became subjects of sexuality in the West. Though it was Foucault's ambition to proceed through Christianity and eventually rejoin the Victorians, his turn to the Greeks torqued a genealogical account premised on continuities within modernity. Neither alien Others nor idealized ancestors, Foucault's Greeks came to stand at an oblique angle to the present.

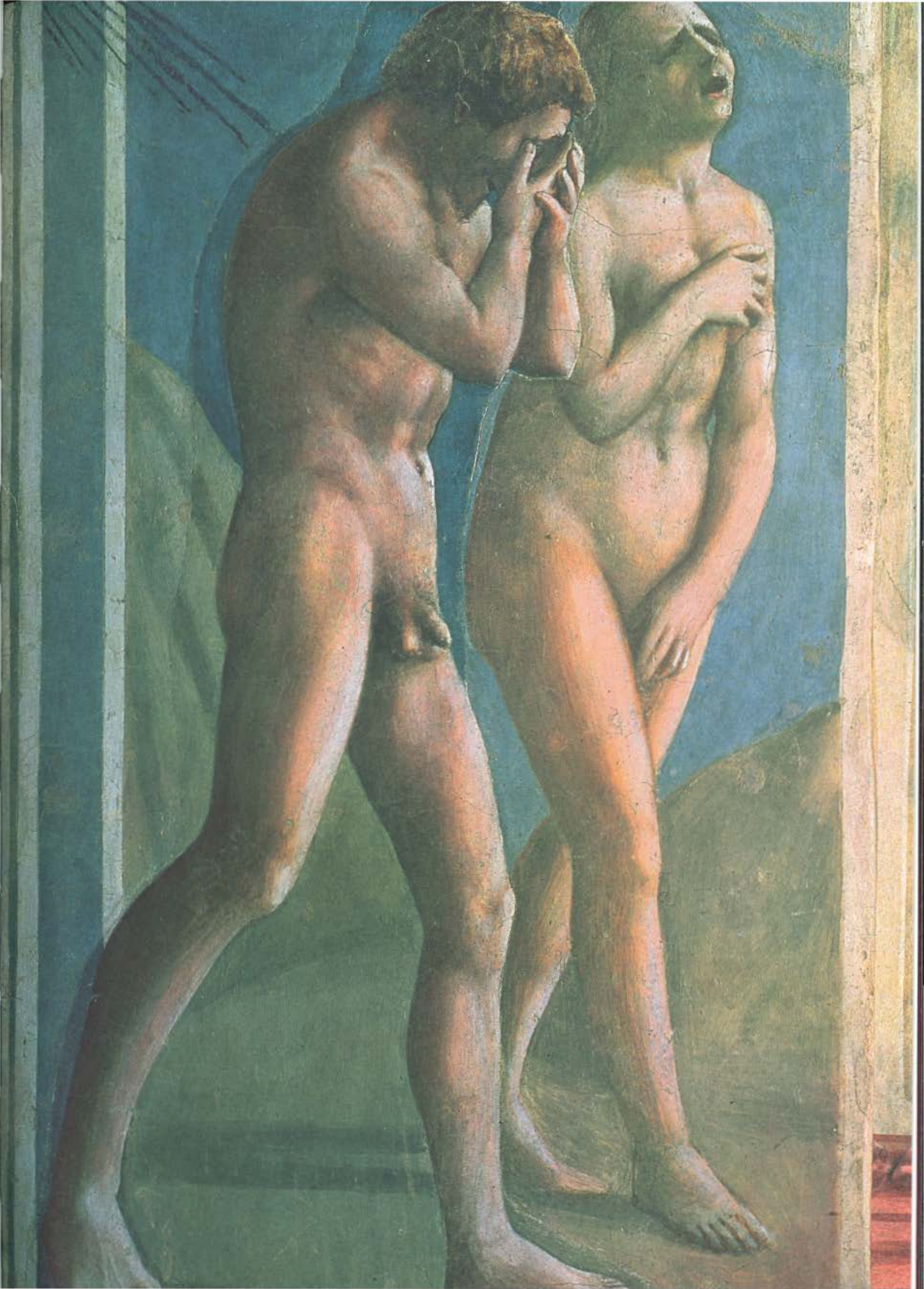
The processes of [transmission](#), too, can belie the tidy linearity implicit in the "handing-down" of *traditio*. The afterlife of ancient

objects, even that of the classical sculpture most prized today, has been governed by contingency. What remains of material culture is nothing but the "flotsam and jetsam" of happenstance. By contrast, texts tend to be deliberately preserved, passed down from one scribe to the next, at least before the invention of the printing press. Still, even here, *tychē* wreaks havoc and yields surprises. The only library extant in its entirety from antiquity, which is dominated by texts of the Epicurean philosopher Philodemus, owes its survival to being carbonized by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 CE (the same eruption that buried Pompeii). The epic poem of Lucretius, *On the Nature of Things*, survived by the slender thread of a single manuscript that was rediscovered in 1417 by Poggio Bracciolini. Is it an accident that these fluke recoveries from the drift of time are the texts of Epicureanism, the philosophy of the swerve?

In the second of his conversations with Bruno Latour in the early 1990s, Michel Serres offers a wild reimagining of nonlinear genealogy. In the midst of a discussion of method, he introduces a vignette about an Alpine guide in Switzerland who falls into a crevasse in the mountains. Half a century later, his perfectly conserved body is rediscovered in a glacier. The long-deferred funeral vigil creates a scene that illustrates the perverse logic of anachronism: a group of seventy-something brothers mourning their youthful father. Serres' point is that we live within a manifold of temporalities. What is ancient can be awakened in the present as a younger contemporary rather than a distant ancestor. Time itself is not linear, even if its measurement is; its distances cannot be plotted and fixed by Cartesian coordinates alone. Time folds and loops, "gathered together, with multiple pleats"; it follows the twists and turns of *mētis*, not the classical logic of Euclidean geometry; it *flows*.

Time flows because it is liquid, and its flows are often turbulent, its currents interrupted by vortices and countercurrents. The Seine runs beneath the Mirabeau Bridge, Serres says, sampling Apollinaire, but he adds: "All the water that passes beneath the Mirabeau Bridge will not necessarily flow out into the English Channel; many little trickles turn back toward Charenton or upstream." "All sailors know very well," he writes elsewhere, "that you cannot always go down a river effortlessly. . . . Ophelia's boat goes upstream, here and there, Moses had a good chance of not dying at sea, the poetic waters of dreams know









little of river transport and hydrodynamics.” The river here does not so much enact or defy time as faithfully follow its laws, alternating between flows that are sometimes laminar—that is, moving in a smooth stream, as in the arc of a fountain jet—and sometimes turbulent.

Turbulence is in fact not independent of laminar flow but, according to chaos theory, emerges from it. For Serres, this axiom is both an underlying principle of what he calls “liquid history” and the hidden key to deciphering the Epicurean swerve, long the Achilles’ heel of ancient atomism. Lucretius describes the swerve as the sudden declension (*clinamen*) in an object’s path. But he uses it, too, in the context of the apparent rupture in the flow of things by animal motion, leading many later readers to see in the swerve a nascent theory of agency or free will. Serres has no patience for the subjectivist reading. He instead reinscribes the swerve into an atomist physics provocatively reread as a physics of fluids informed by the work of the third-century BCE mathematician Archimedes, whose treatise *On Floating Bodies* has recently been described by the historian of science Reviel Netz as one of the great “liquid-marvels” of the Hellenistic age, part of a veritable obsession with the strange properties of liquids equally visible in the poet-librarian Callimachus’ cataloguing of natural wonders of water and the fluid-driven mechanical toys of the era’s greatest inventor, Ctesibius. In this reading, the emergence of turbulence in the primal rain of atoms is what accounts for the formation of a complex cosmos, populated with composite bodies that take shape and pause, fleeting islands of stability, before falling back into flow.

For Serres, the affinities of twentieth-century chaos theory with Lucretius’ poem demand the liquid history that Epicurean physics underwrites. That is to say, already embedded in the physics of *On the Nature of Things* is a theory of history. The theory is vindicated by its very *enactment* through the fold in time that puts Lucretius, the ancient poet-scientist of fluids, on the threshold of the present. The proximity of points casts chaos theory and its logic of fluids not as something radically new but as a recurrence in a series. The structure of recurrence is crucial to liquid history: “Physics and mechanics were not born in an instant, from the void or contemporary pressure alone. . . . They are reborn, that’s all.” [Revolution](#) is always re-volution.

Yet recurrence is not repetition. Difference inhabits the series. For if chaos theory simply duplicated Lucretius, one of the two theories would be superfluous or obsolete. Even if we stuck to the familiar way of describing atomist physics as an “anticipation” of modern science, we would strip the ancient material of creative potency. Its capacity to intervene productively in the present inheres in its angle of declension, in the moment of *crossing*. A physics of fluids is not the same at all times and places. Lucretius is right (“*Lucrèce a raison*”), as Serres asserts defiantly at the start of his study, but over the course of the book he teases out the double sense of the French: not just that Lucretius is right but that Lucretius “has reason,” a reason that is not isomorphic with our reason but resonant with it and, in that noncoincidental resonance, capable of unsettling its universalizing claims.

The admixture of recurrence and difference coincides neither with timelessness nor with a linear historicism. Serres’ model renders Lucretius’ text “untimely,” in the sense that Nietzsche uses the word when he writes, “For I do not know what value classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come.” The cultural critic Yuri Lotman, who was inspired, like Serres, by the twentieth-century systems theorist and chemist Ilya Prigogine, described moments where past and present simultaneously combust with the Russian word *vzryv* (in which the ideas of explosion and implosion converge). In the experience of the past as at once radically continuous and radically different lies an incalculable element of creativity, the opening of *kairos* within *chronos*. Can we cultivate encounters with antiquity that respond to the contours of liquid time? Through what forms? Through what institutions?

## INSTITUTION

The conditions under which the modern encounter with classical antiquity takes place are highly dependent on a number of institutions that have been built up over the past couple of centuries: libraries, universities, museums (as well as smaller institutions such as academies, archives, professional organizations, foreign schools, and archaeological institutes). Indeed, the relationship with antiquity—its preservation,







interpretation, and public presentation—is a crucial factor in how these institutions themselves arrived at their contemporary forms. The institutional library, for example, has deep roots in Ptolemaic Alexandria, but we could also point to the privileging of Greek and Roman texts in premodern and modern manuscript and book culture. With the rise of the modern university in nineteenth-century Germany, it was the classical philologists who first developed the research seminar, soon to be adopted by physicists and other academic fields. “Well into the nineteenth century in Europe,” write Lorraine Daston and Glenn Most, “classical philology not only counted as *a* science; it was *the* science, the model of the highest form of knowledge.” The envy of researchers in the natural sciences, funding for large-scale philological projects as well as for ambitious archaeological excavations supported the academy and filled the halls of national museums with artifacts from the ancient Mediterranean. In a double sense, the history of the modern museum, too, is inseparable from the history of classical art—not only the history of its acquisition but also the history of its display to the public. The Vatican Museums, for example, were founded with the discovery of the Laocoön statue group in Rome in 1506, purchased by Pope Julius II and exhibited to the public almost immediately thereafter.

But the function of museums in mediating between art and the public has never been straightforward, not least because of the tension between preservation and display, specialized research, and didactic mission. The tension is perhaps latent in the idea of the “curator,” who has traditionally been tasked with “taking care” (*cura*, or, in Greek, *epimeleia*) of those fragile and fragmentary objects which are at continual risk of **effacement**, but who also takes on the responsibility of organizing relations between these objects as well as between these objects and the public. The situation is exaggerated, again, in the case of classical antiquities, not only art objects in the museum but also architectural monuments.

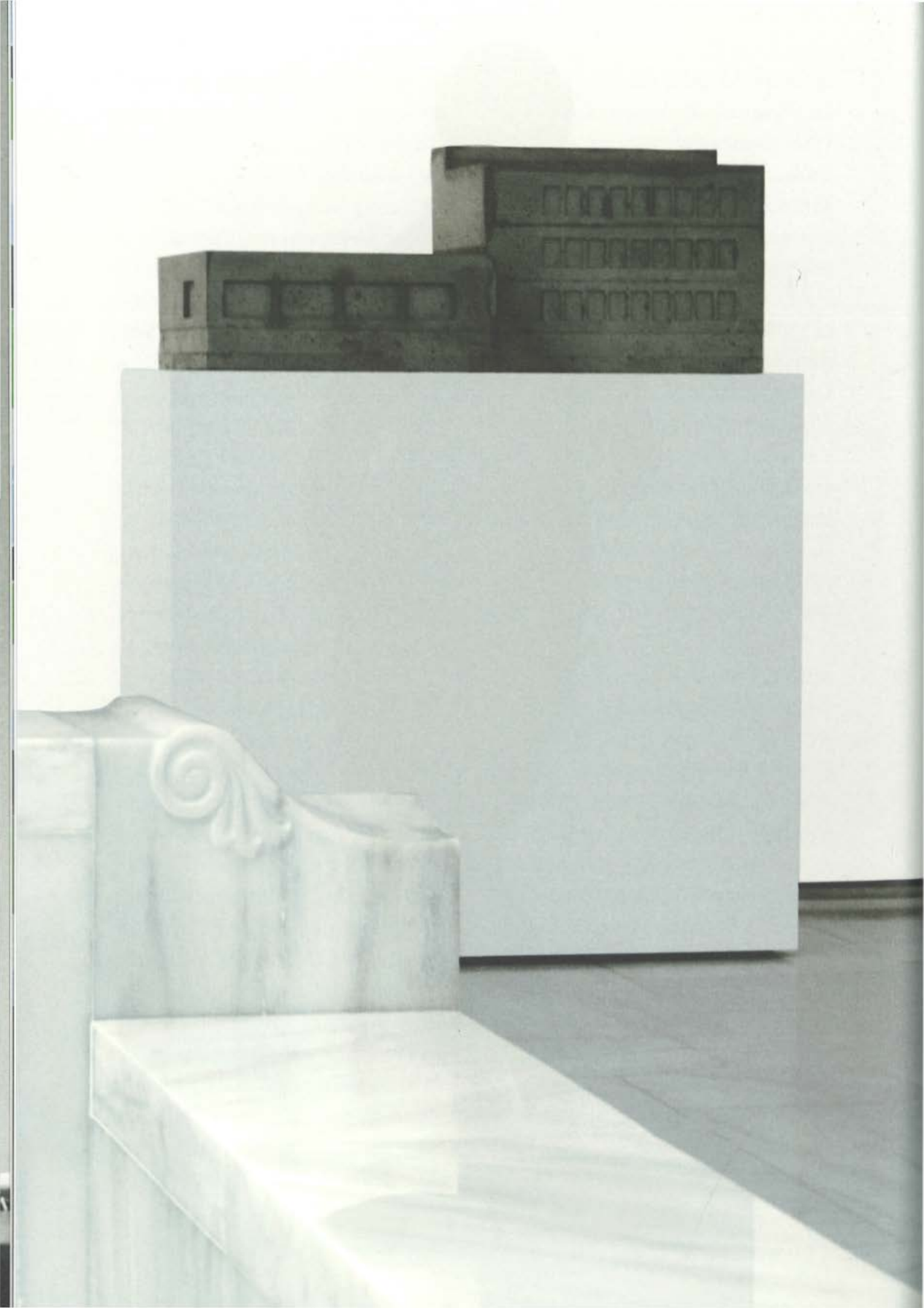
The founding of the Royal Museum in Berlin in the 1820s (renamed the Altes Museum in 1845) offers a snapshot of these tensions. Triggered by the return of the looted Prussian collections after the end of the Napoleonic Wars—a reminder of the always latent liquidity of antique **capital**—the impetus to create a museum was initially caught between

opposing paths. The one not taken was that advocated by Aloys Hirt, who, inspired by the original Alexandrian meaning of the *mouseion* as the haunt of scholars under royal patronage, envisioned a new state institution devoted primarily to the academic study of classical art by scholars. What instead prevailed was a museum in the modern sense of an institution oriented toward the public. Along with the orientation outward came a less central position for antiquity. It is true that the building's architect, Karl Friedrich Schinkel, ensured that the visitor's first experience of the museum would be of classical antiquity, in a neoclassical rotunda filled with the most esteemed pieces of ancient sculpture. Yet his design bathed these statues in a twilight that suggested not so much "art's rejuvenation but the irrevocability of art's end," as Douglas Crimp writes, a *marmoreal* beauty in which awe toward the classical past is cultivated alongside a sense of antiquity's obsolescence in the face of a historical push ever forward. As if succumbing to the same forces, the Altes Museum did eventually come to serve primarily as the home of the Collection of Classical Antiquities (*Antikensammlung*) at the turn of the twentieth century, following the expansion of the complex of museums on Berlin's Museumsinsel.

Hirt and Schinkel articulate different triangulations of the museum with classical antiquity and with the public. Both models, however, withdraw antiquity from the messy flow of the present. Either the classical models remain vital, but only because they are kept in the hands of scholars; or they enter public space as relics from a world surpassed. In the end the choice would seem to be between preservation within a closed community or diffusion at the cost of a living legacy. The horns of the dilemma surely foreclose other viable possibilities. But the dilemma's historical enactment at one of the origin points of the modern museum brings into relief the complexities of any institutional project of attending to the classical past in the modern period. The questions it raises resonate powerfully today: Where is the interface between the scholar's attention to classical antiquity and that of a wider public? What kinds of narratives should govern the exhibition of classical art and engagement with classical antiquity more broadly speaking? How do those narratives reify value, subject it to critique, consider the dynamics of its formation, or argue in favor of it? How do such narratives underwrite more ambitious ones







about the history of art, literature, and culture, Western or otherwise? How does the relation of the present with antiquity in its contestedness, complexity, and creativity become an object of shared aesthetic attention (together with the contested categories of “classical” antiquity and “the contemporary”)? How is the robustness of a [dialogue](#) with the past implicated in our dialogues with one another?

For all the suggestions of divergence and forking paths that the story of the Altes Museum recounts, the representation of classical antiquity in the modern museum or at the site of the monument is more likely to try to reconcile the academy and the public exhibition. On the one hand, the enduring grandeur of the object is played up: the object is surrounded by columns, put on a pedestal to be admired as the embodiment of timeless value. On the other, the object is put in context, restored to a system of relations (historical, art historical, sociocultural) that come into focus only through expert investigation and careful reconstruction. The object is caught between a sense of the self-evident value of classical antiquity and a sense of value or importance that is elicited from the persuasive work of curation that aims to educate the public in such a way that it becomes possible for visitors to grasp what, exactly, is being preserved for their good, the reasons behind conservation, and the very labor of conservation itself. The object becomes a [documument](#). The particular conditions of representation, of course, vary. An archaic kouros statue will be displayed differently from a coin. The Parthenon marbles are located in a very different set of relations in the British Museum in London and in the Acropolis Museum in Athens. Nevertheless, the very idea of curation seems to encode these two perspectives as two ways of understanding care. The labor of care recognizes that antiquity’s remains are highly vulnerable to loss, diffusion, and misinterpretation in a turbulent environment to which, like photographic [film](#) in a digital world, they are maladapted. These remains have to be preserved, cared for, in a literal sense. The very act of care as an expense of time and resources implicitly affirms their value for the contemporary world and for imagined future communities (and, conversely, neglect communicates a drop in valuation). But precisely because antiquity is not wholly at home in our world—timelessness and obsolescence being two sides of the same coin—it is not just a question of

preserving objects as a matter of course. Their relations with one another, with larger historical narratives, and with contemporary audiences have to be created.

The situation will look different if we shift from the museum or the architectural site, from objects and monuments and institutions, to the circulation of ancient culture as literature, ideas, and images—Sophocles’ *Antigone* (arguably the Western world’s most performed play, at least of the past century), the Oedipus complex, the gods of the Parthenon friezes dressed in Gucci in a recent ad campaign. From a state of scarce commodities and controlled exposure we move to the viral proliferation of classical memes in popular culture and acts of adaptation in a limitless cycle of reuse and re-creation driven by the voracious machines of [mythmaking](#). In the domain of the immaterial, antiquity becomes hyper-liquid, capable of circulating just about anywhere, infinitely protean, hybrid. Under these circumstances, it would seem that the very fact of circulation attests to the tenacity and adaptability of antiquity, its depthless capacity to enter into relations with contemporary worlds.

Yet the dynamic we saw in the museum is not altogether absent. The appropriation of antiquity is difficult to separate from powerful cultural commitments to antiquity’s value as timeless and given—that is, from the ongoing operation of classicization and the ideological power it carries with it. At the same time, in the many local and idiosyncratic acts of appropriation there are a plurality of strategies for putting aspects of antiquity in relationship to one another, with other cultural forms, and with the contemporary world, from the flamenco adaptation of *Antigone* by Soledad Barrio and Noche Flamenca that recently ran in New York to Anne Carson’s rereading of the Heracles and Geryon myth in *Autobiography of Red* and *Red Doc* > to Elizabeth Price’s recent video work *A Restoration*, based on her engagement with the Minoan collections and archives of the Ashmolean and Pitt Rivers museums. The relationship between past and present is wilder—more fluid—than that controlled under standard museum conditions. But these interventions, too, are forms of curation, if by that term we understand the labor of creating new relations with and within antiquity—of plotting new [constellations](#) and recovering forgotten ones—as a necessary part of its preservation. The point is not that all acts of curation will be equally successful, whether









we judge success by fidelity to the past or impact on the present. And yet we cannot dictate in advance which forms of curation and sense-making will succeed at maximizing antiquity's untimely capacities to disrupt the present in creative and generative ways, capacities that can only be activated by attention to its difference from the present, indeed, its resistance to appropriation.

We therefore need to reflect more, and to reflect more creatively, on the very work of making relations with the classical past. This work is both idiosyncratically individual and undertaken in collectives and communities, as supported and shaped by a variety of institutions among which the museum has played a particularly important role. How relations are created is integral to the value antiquity has for many forms of "us" in the present. *Liquid Antiquity* stakes its interest precisely in this more broadly defined curatorial labor of making relations within a process of at once affirming and querying value. There is no neutral space from which to begin. The labor itself is motivated by investment. But rather than presume in advance the currency of the classical, the project filters Greek antiquity through a figure, liquidity, that is internal to the classical in its ideal conceptions (as life, vitality) but also anathema to it (as malleability, chaos, risk). It affirms value in the complexity of the ancient landscape disclosed by liquidity, and in the models of temporal relation with the ancient past to which forms of liquid history give rise. But this book also aims to lay bare not only its own strategies of making value but also some of the processes of seeking and affirming value that have characterized other encounters with classical antiquity, in other historical periods and by artists as well as by scholars, as part of the work of engaging antiquity and the legacies of classicism in the present. The hope is to unleash an antiquity that is liquid in its very refusal to be contained, in its [sublime](#) excess, but also in its strange and persistent capacities to make connections.



I



B O D Y

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** We're in your library, and I'm looking at all the various titles. The range of different periods and authors you have is amazing. How has art history informed your practice? Or how has your practice affected how you think about history?

**URS FISCHER [UF]** A friend and I once had this fantasy about writing art history from the point of view of the artist. We basically wanted to make the point that artists have been doing the same thing since the Stone Age until now. There's a lot of sedimentation in history, which you can see in museums. Some works are held up as important even though they might no longer have an impact on daily life, and maybe never will again. You can walk through room after room in a museum and not know what to do with the objects inside.

**BH** Do you think art history from the perspective of artists would be much flatter, in the sense that it could be seen in terms of a unified project?

**UF** We would look for a different story line. I don't know much about art history, but I do think that it's about rivalries, about a work being this or that. When an artist achieves something, there may be a kind of amazement, but it's also seen as a challenge. Art historians will try to dissect a work to build a kind of order, to claim it as one thing or connect it to another, but from an artist's point of view, I don't think that order matters much. Instead of taking the more academic approach of putting things into certain places and trying to connect them, I'd prefer to look at why people made art in the first place and how they related to older artworks.

I read a book once about how the perception of medieval times has changed over the centuries. Each generation creates its own medieval period, and ideas about it change for reasons that have advantages at a particular time. I believe that even though a piece of art might have a narrative, that narrative is not the same as those in the world of thoughts and words, which demand a beginning and an end and a certain curve, a certain motion. Analyzing art with words will ultimately always lead to a different story than the one of the art itself. For example, when you watch Werner Herzog's *Cave of Forgotten Dreams* [2010], you hear him talking about the artists who made these ancient cave drawings. It's evident that they weren't just made by one man or woman; these drawings must have been everywhere, like graffiti.









In one cave, for example, there's a 45,000-year span between the oldest and the newest drawings, meaning there were always at least a few individuals making them at any given time.

**BH** I'd like to talk about how you see your own position in these traditions.

Could we turn to your version of Giambologna's *Rape of the Sabine Women* [1583]? What appealed to you about casting that sculpture in wax?

**UF** I was looking to make a historically inspired sculpture that could function as the counterpart to a wax portrait I made of a friend of mine, Rudi Stingel, and I also wanted to make a monumental thing that could be taken down. What I liked about the *Rape of the Sabine Women* was that it's very developed in certain ways, but there isn't just one expression—there's no Bernini moment. And wax appealed to me because if you have a burning candle, say, physics will determine how big each wax drip will be, and some of the shapes the drips create will just not relate to the bigger mass. I liked that; it was a formal solution.

**BH** So it was about the relationship between the formal beginning and the eventual deformation?

**UF** Exactly.

**BH** How did that sculpture behave differently from, say, the female nudes you also made in wax? Is the Giambologna classical or monumental in a particular way that affects its deformation?

**UF** Yes. If you picked a Henry Moore it just would not evoke emotions in the same way. It would be more personal, more about taking things down. I think there is human tragedy in that, but it's different. I don't know much about Giambologna, but he seemed as if he came a hundred years after his contemporaries, so my sculpture became very mannered.

**BH** Did the wax behave as you expected it to, or was there an element of unpredictability?

**UF** It was pretty predictable. I mean, you can control it to some degree by placing the wicks in a certain way. There's the human order of the original form, and the natural order comes through the dripping wax. The drops make their own decisions. Natural order always has grace; nature has grace.

**BH** The idea of decay or deformation is a constant theme in your work. What in it attracts you?

**UF** It's kind of our life. From the moment you start growing you start getting old, and then you're gone. Our interaction with ourselves is one of constant







change; you're never finished, like a sculpture. It's natural to me to think of certain things staying in motion; before a flower blooms, there is a moment of decay. Each stage is equal in a way.

**BH** So often we think of art as a kind of protection against mortality, as standing in opposition to age or change. Do you think there's another dimension of timelessness within art that's also meant to change?

**UF** I like your use of the word *protection*. It's another fault of art, this idea that it can protect us from change. There is a continuum of understanding: you can think of the physical life of a conceptual sculpture as limited to a time span during which it must perform a certain act. On the other hand, that doesn't hold anybody back from re-creating that experience. It's not like once you've done something it can't be redone. A conceptual sculpture basically doesn't age, because you can always redo it.

**BH** How do you feel about working in marble or bronze?

**UF** I work in bronze sometimes, but marble, no. I sometimes think about it, but I wouldn't know how to interact with marble at this point. The problem is that it is very dominant—there's a lot of history there that weighs things down. If you want to work with marble you have to contend with how it was used in antiquity, with how the Romans saw it, how it was used in the Renaissance. You might look at a marble sculpture and think, "Cool, a marble sculpture," but to bring your voice into that conversation you have to have a very clear way of expressing yourself. The same goes for bronze. Sometimes you don't know if a bronze sculpture is two thousand years old, five hundred days old, or just five days old. It all lumps into bronze sculpture. Ceramic is even worse. Ceramic just looks like ceramic. Very few artists can master and really own ceramic.

**BH** So it's almost like there's a sedimentation of art history in these forms of material. There's something heavy about them that makes it hard for the artist to make them their own.

**UF** *Heavy* is one way to see it. I don't know if they are heavy, but they feel heavy when you try to use them. I think when you make an artwork you should not be looking to just make another statue, another thing to fill space. Then it will drown in history. There are successful examples of sculpture—Bernini's marble ones beat a lot of things, but even he didn't make that many that are good. This is just a difficult game.

**BH** Do you worry about the afterlives of your works in museum contexts?

**UF** I don't have a problem with museums. I think it's great that a museum can let me revisit an artist I don't understand, or see a work by a person I didn't know existed. It's cool that they are intended for the people, and that each has its own DNA and history and has developed its own misunderstandings. But some works are just not that good, you know? That's the problem. There are not that many good works in the world.

**BH** Do you think that intelligence inheres in an artwork?

**UF** If you work with your hands as an artist, you realize there's so much information in those tools, so much knowledge. When you look at Chinese or Korean or Japanese calligraphy, you can really see the motion of the body, the knowledge and flow, and just an understanding. There is something of the soul there—I relate to that.



CHARLES RAY [CR] I think I understand the title of your project, *Liquid Antiquity*, to mean that the ideas or, even more, the zeitgeist of ancient times are not fossilized, crystallized, hardened, or somehow broken through temporal travel. In my imagination I see the title *Liquid Antiquity* as a broken glass with milk spilling all over the floor, flowing into cracks, under doors, and behind the stove. Entering a thermodynamic equation brings an infinite amount of variation to the configuration of bits of glass and flowing milk; one configuration that could result from the accident is the reassembly of the glass. In thermodynamic terms, it is possible for the glass to jump back up on the table totally reassembled, but this is extremely improbable due to the infinite amount of configurations the spilled milk and the shards of glass could take upon the kitchen floor. Could antiquity be that way in that it can't be reassembled due to the enormous number of events, activities, endeavors, and ideas in our great cultural mosaic? While this analogy doesn't quite work, I can't get back to antiquity through the shards, fragments, and parts of context from the past. I guess you could say the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* are pretty complete, but the blind poet is nowhere to be seen. While Homer dies, he disappears through disintegration, but the poem tumbles forward with art and ideas liberated from its makers.

My sculptures have been referred to as neoclassical. That I have a great interest in antiquity and classical art is an assumption so obvious I don't see how it could possibly be true. The first definition of *statue* that pops up on the Internet from the *American Heritage Dictionary* is "a three-dimensional form or likeness sculpted, modeled, carved, or cast in material such as stone, clay, wood, or bronze." I guess it begs the question, are the differences between works like my *Self-Portrait* mannequin [1990] and *Young Man* [2012] simply stylistic? Is the development, if any, in figurative ability? What is the distance between them? Does one look forward and the other backward? Is one archaic and the other classical? Is one a statue of a man and the other a sculpture of a mannequin? Are both figurative?

Statues, of course, are figurative, although all figurations are not statues. My interest in Greek and archaic sculpture came partially as an escape from the abundance of contemporary art. A few years ago, the galleries containing these works were the quiet ones in our encyclopedic institutions. I spent a







lot of time looking at Assyrian reliefs; ancient works from the Middle East; archaic, Egyptian, and Greek sculpture. I formed a relationship with the Manhattan kouros and was taken by the nature of its surface; parts of it are awkwardly stylized while others are much more natural. His forward step into space was also a step into time. Where was he going? A boy into manhood? The archaic toward the classic? The votive purpose and/or milepost aspect of this strange and enigmatic work brought me back over and over. This dance of stylization and naturalization seemed not to be orchestrated in a moment of becoming, but through time, it fell into a historical relationship across the surface of the sculpture. Its visualization in my current time became an inward exploration. The external surface of the kouros is the inner surface of my being; aspects of my behavior are stylized as the figure's hair, toes, and genitals, so natural and full, reflecting what is inescapable in all of our conditions. Why is the kouros so contemporary? Because we can still see it? He was made with punches rather than chisels. He stands fully in the round, yet reflects the rectangularity of a quarry block. My high modernist background saw sculpture as a relationship of parts, and the surface of a figurative sculpture as a kind of dimensional manifold for sculptural events to unfold upon. What are these events? Is the meaning in their rendering, in the skill and ability? Or could a subtlety exist between a belly and a lip? I didn't see the sculpture as a representation, but rather representation as one of the many elements brought to bear on a dynamic armature of a statue. This seemingly Frankensteinian philosophy of wholes becoming parts, parts dominating wholes, and pursuing un-thought-of contradictions rather than an exploration from the inside out doesn't really pull apart the definition of *statue* and reassemble its meaning at my own whim and fancy; rather, it just reflects my inability to express the dynamics of the medium. The medium exists in time, but it changes from across the room as you stand in front of it, moving closer, discovering details, and when you back away, finding that aspects of the work remain lodged in your mind as easily as the sculpture itself tumbles through time.

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** I'm intrigued by how the part-and-whole relationship first appears in your imagination of liquid antiquity as a broken glass that in its shattering is still mixed with the milk it once held, and then comes back in your "Frankensteinian" definition of statue as wholes becoming parts, parts dominating wholes. Would you say that in both cases there are similar forces



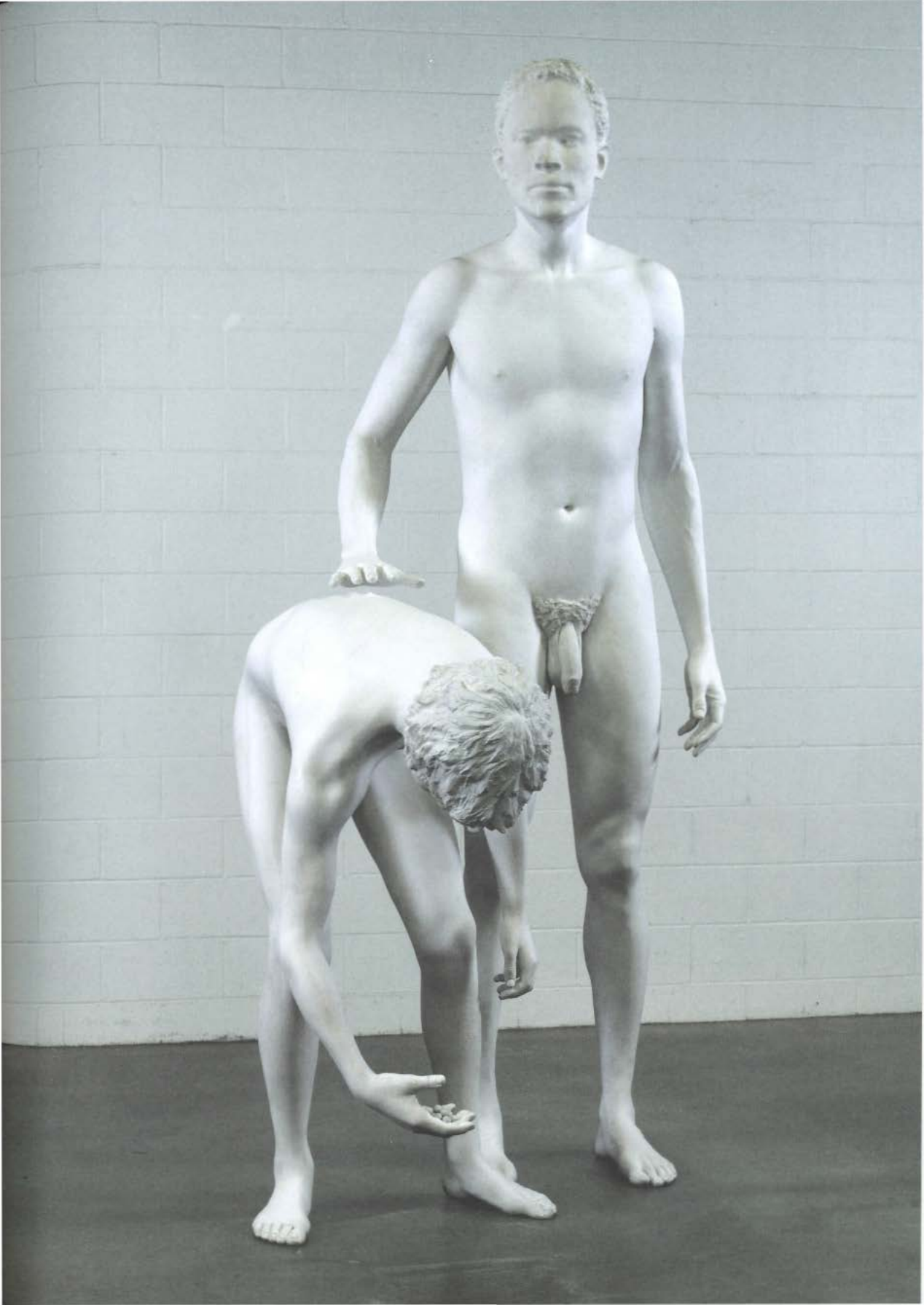






at work in the resistance to wholes? I'm especially interested in the convergent imagery because of how often the idealized body of classical sculpture has supported, historically, the fantasy of restoring antiquity to a wholeness. Does the archaic form support a different way of thinking of the afterlife of antiquity?

- CR I think fragments and artifacts from antiquity can't rediscover their wholeness, if there ever was such a thing. While ancient context is important and dealt with in historical scholarship, I find myself in a strangely dynamic and contradictory relationship with fragments from the past. Richard Neer once told me to remember that the kouros was one of the few smooth objects in a very rough and rutted world. The contemporary world is rough and rutted in a different way, and perhaps the whole figure of the kouros perfectly fits within a contemporary hole—wholes and holes being things that are created by a moment and a culture or population. Why does the kouros generate poetry in me? Or is the question, how does it generate poetry in me? I see the why as coming from my time and place and the how coming from the ancient artfulness of the sculptor's stone and chisel. The why and the how never meet and resolve, but they continue to create a dynamic whenever I am in front of a work. A friend told me that the Getty Museum staff used to drag their kouros (fake as it is?) out into the courtyard to view it under the bright California sun, finding ancient bedazzlement in the work's magic. For me, it is great to go look at the sculpture up on the second floor of the Getty Villa. It's in a room across from the *Victorious Youth*. You can see both through a glass door. The discussion around the kouros' authenticity is fascinating, and if we go into it, I'll lose myself in parts and wholes once again due to the temporal disparity of the various stylistic aspects between the thighs, toes, hair, lips, and so on. . . . I have a lot of thoughts about this fake, and when I feel the flaw in the stone across the forehead, I feel my own inauthenticity rather than that of the sculpture. My interest is in art in its present context. Everything catches up with everything else. I don't know if this will last forever, or when my privileged vantage point will crumble, because it certainly will, but I think antiquity's whole is—or, I should say, antiquity's fragments are—a bit like bronze bullets made from a torn-down statue, or perhaps bricks from broken stone. But I have uses for art that have little to do with historical understanding. These uses could be criticized as being simply psychodynamic, an attempt to make a whole of my parts, rather than those of antiquity.











**BH** I'd like to ask you more about the tenuous non-relation of your why and how, which calls to mind Nietzsche's remark, "I do not know what value classical studies could have for our time if they were not untimely—that is to say, acting counter to our time and thereby acting on our time and, let us hope, for the benefit of a time to come." You had mentioned earlier that you first turned to Greek sculpture as an escape from the abundance of contemporary art; it seems important to the how of the sculpture's artfulness that it is ancient. The ancient here suggests something of Nietzsche's idea of the untimely, a capacity to act counter to our time and therefore be all the more powerful in it.

**CR** When I read the Nietzsche quote, it seemed poignant and relevant, but when I started thinking about it, I found myself trying to understand it. I'm good at taking things apart, but putting them back together is another matter. I did come to classical and archaic sculptures through my position in the modern world. Sometimes, I have large flashes of inspiration that seem not to come from thinking about sculpture, but from thinking sculpturally. When I think sculpturally, parts don't seem to be an issue. When I think about sculpture, I'm overwhelmed by syntax and a kind of sculptural sentence structure. Thinking sculpturally is not intuitive or a hands-on thing; I certainly don't think with my hands any more than I think with my body on a long morning hike. There might be something to a superimposition of physical pattern on the physicality of mental patterns. I had no moment of realization or inspiration when I first walked in to a gallery full of ancient art. My wife, Silvia Gaspardo-Moro, spent a long time looking at and working with Asian art collections. I had no interest in galleries with Asian art—they were dark and full of cases of bronze and old wood figures sculpted in a scale and stylization that I found boring, if not impenetrable. Shortly after Silvia and I first met, I spent time with her looking at this old dusty stuff. I said, "I have no idea what to look at or how to start looking." And Silvia said, "Just try to spot the fakes." That one comment opened up the work for me, because it gave me a foothold, as tenuous as it was, to look at these sculptures from my own culture and time. Years later, I saw Sherman Lee's work at the Cleveland Museum of Art as a kind of awakening of humanity contrasted against the surrounding city. In the Museum of Oriental Ceramics in Osaka, there's a beautiful Tang figurine robed and stylized in the appropriate manner. She's portly and beautiful with a kinesthetic gesture; not body language



but body felt-ness comes through in the work as an inflation of form. The bird that once perched on her finger is missing. I assume she was listening to birdsong. There's such an amazing amount of delicacy in the subject: rendered form, stylization, and human perception in the figure's moment, all created by an armature of force rather than physical structure. The sculptor, while the clay was still wet, made slashes across its surface with a tool, fast and quick, describing drapery's moment. Whatever the intention, and juxtaposition of the lines once were, in my time and moment, I'm not sure how deeply I care, as I see them so clearly from my own sculptural vantage point. Is that the why confronting the how? As much as I try, I can't separate the how and the why, and continue having difficulty explaining them. I don't see ancient or classical works as from another time; obviously they were made hundreds of years ago. Their intent is a bit like my parents' first date, I don't really need to go there because my relationship to my mother and father begins later. I know there was a kiss, but it's something I don't really think about.

**BH** I wonder whether in your sculptural thinking there is a temporal dimension, too. It's interesting to me how you have emphasized so strongly your own sculptural viewpoint, which stands in stark contrast to the emphasis traditionally made by the scholar, whose fidelity is to the past. The history of engagements with antiquity since at least the Renaissance is littered with examples of this dialectic between the aesthetic and the scientific encounter with the classical world. Do you think there's a total coincidence between your own sculptural viewpoint and the viewpoint of your culture and time, or is the *own* in the first case a position that can be entirely located in you but not entirely located in a particular time or place? Is yours an embodied, practiced, dynamic way of being in time that is located at a moment of layered times?

**CR** I'm interested in what scholars have to say, but I'm not a scholar. I don't make a claim for appreciation, or for naïveté about how the objects got to the museum, or how the museum was created in the first place. The dialectic you spoke of between the aesthetic and the scientific encounter with the classical world isn't so present in my personal life. In my relationship to classical objects I am a bit like an animal turning bones over, looking for scraps of meat. It would be wrong to say I don't have a dog in the fight mentioned above, but I do keep a distance from it, as important as it might be.

And is there a temporal dimension to my sculptural thinking? Yes, because my thinking occurs in time. but I can't say that any of the sculptures we've talked about are about time or any aspect of it. I have written a bit in the past about my sculpture *Young Man* and how that sculpture, in a sense, made itself over time; how it freed itself from my authorship, and then tumbled into time. I can understand if this sounds overly poetic, exaggerated, even foggy. My statement that I don't think about sculpture, but rather that I think sculpturally, seems to dry out when written on the page. Sculptures, like thoughts, have a dynamic quality for me that can't necessarily be described as developmental or evolutionary. I find how sculpture was made in the past extremely informative, and it's hard to separate the technical from the philosophical. Like Greek punches, thinking is also a tool to carve through the present age. While I'm happy to get all the attention and praise that could possibly be bestowed on my work, I think a time and a culture make a work, and authorship is not immortality; it's simply an index or category. Part of the beauty of the kouros is his step forward into space, which is also a step forward into time. He never quite makes it into our age, but what comes with him from the past? We also have to take a step to meet him somewhere outside time.

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** I want to start by asking you about *The Larry Project*, a large-scale, ongoing project across many different media that has occupied you since 2007. The whole thing begins with a ruin, so to speak—the abandoned house of a former neighbor of your parents, whom you call Larry. Could you talk a little bit about what initially attracted you to the house?

**KAARI UPSON [KU]** I can't say what it was that initially attracted me to the house.

The story has been told so many times that I don't know if there is any core to it left, any distinct reality at its center. I avoid the word *truth* whenever possible. But, now, I look back at it from a different vantage point. The first time I entered Larry's house was, I think, in 2005, after a fire. There are many fires in that area, and that house especially seemed to be almost constantly burning down, or falling down, or being rebuilt—it never just *was*, it was always in flux. The only reason I went in was because I noticed the fire department had broken down the door and I had never been inside, nor had I known the person who lived there, because I had just moved back from New York and the guy who built the house had already lost it in a foreclosure. Inside, beds had been thrown around, and boxes and ephemera had been left by the people who lived there. When I went back to weed out and organize the pieces into three different people's lives, I was most interested in Larry because he was this villain in almost an operatic way. My parents had wanted him to leave because he basically built this McMansion in a very rural area and proceeded to imitate a poor man's version of Hugh Hefner's life—he had a pool and a tennis court and ten bedrooms and threw late-night parties with gunfire. I thought that going through this person's stuff would give me information about him. "Larry" didn't start as an art project.

Now, a decade later, I have just finished reading my mother's memoir of her life in postwar Germany, her stories about growing up in a town that had been 90 percent destroyed by bombs. My mother grew up surrounded by ruins. I think it's really interesting that when she moved to the United States, she could have chosen anywhere to live, and she chose a place, San Bernardino, that, by an accident of climate and terrain, re-created those rhythms of loss and instability.

**BH** Does the idea of archaeology generally interest you, the idea of reconstructing lives from the past?







**KU** This idea of “accessing” the self of another through their stuff is very interesting to me. I used to see everything as secondhand, meaning without direct contact; I’ve never seen Larry in the physical world, as a body in front of me. I’ve only seen his images and read his writings and his diary, where he accounted for every dream he had between 1975 and 1981. It was as if I had a cut of his memorabilia and his life from what was maybe a more idealistic time for him because he had just moved to California to reinvent himself. So layers of fantasy were beginning to merge: my fantasy of him, his fantasy of himself. But there was a lot of slippage. The whole project became about the slippages and the gaps. The impossibility of wholeness. When I was working I tried to organize things in an anthropological way, a forensic way, even a pathological way—I was very interested in how you grid out spaces in a crime scene or dig site, how you take in objects and literally lay logic and order over them, like a sheet over a body. That was probably because I was thinking about “On Exactitude in Science,” Borges’ story about the true map that reflected every foot of the space, that ends up consuming the space itself. When I first opened the boxes and looked at the stuff, the idea of hijacking somebody’s life, of running it through my filter and reconstructing it, didn’t seem interesting enough to pursue. There were too many directions to go in. I only started to realize that things were taking off on their own when the house burned down completely in a later fire. After that, I excavated all of the charred beams from the house and stored them. They’re still in storage. They became extremely important keys to objects I would make in the future. I’m interested in storage, emotionally speaking—how we contain the relics of our past, how we conserve situations or relationships, staving off their inevitable decay.

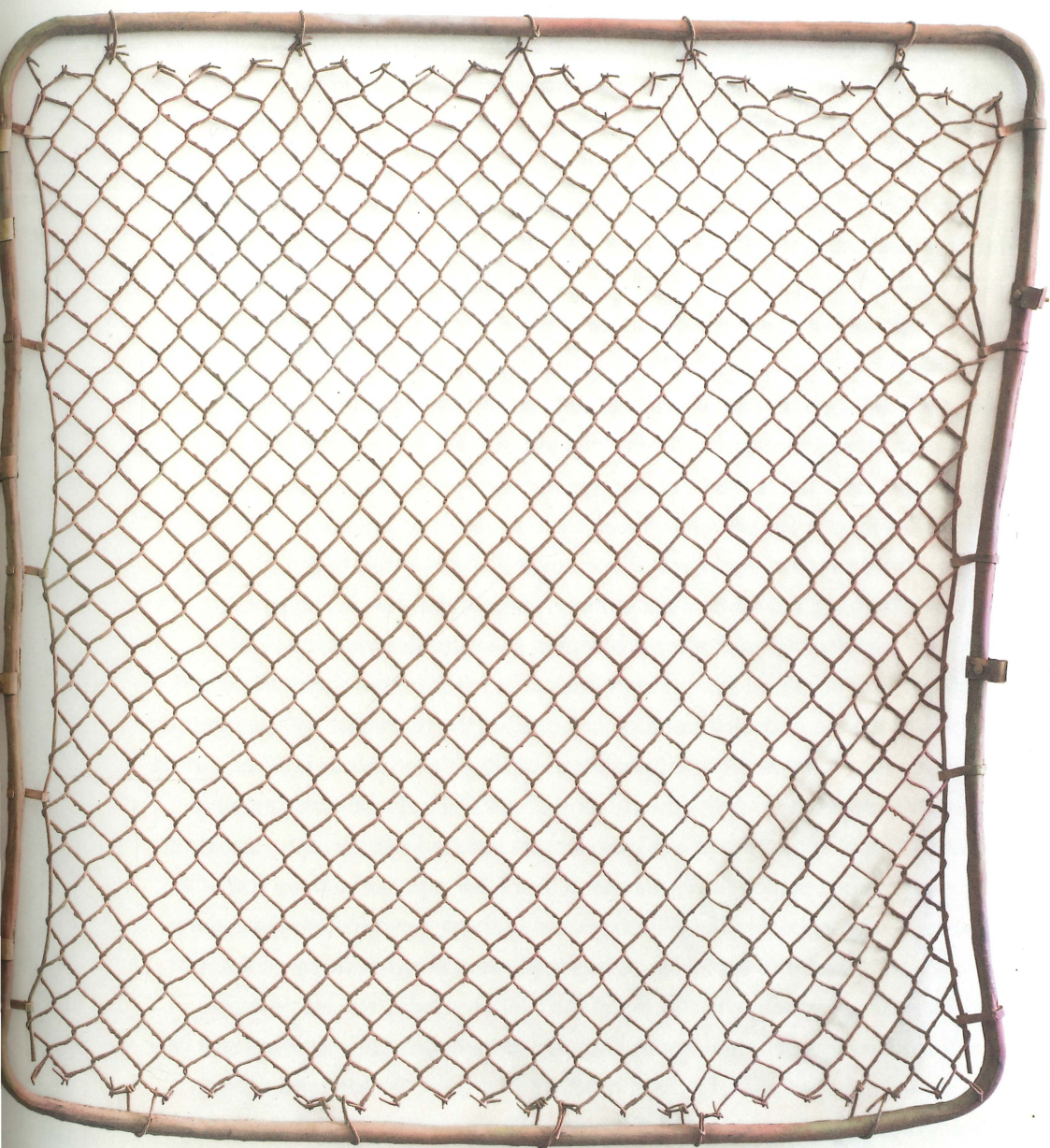
**BH** It sounds like at the moment you realized you could potentially lose more of the record, the project became more urgent for you, and the work more interesting.

**KU** Yes, it hit me when I was at CalArts. I had to start rebuilding. I had Larry’s green diary with all his dreams in it that I cherished reading and analyzing, and I was starting to make video works based on it. Then one day I lost the book, and I decided this was a disaster, because I felt as though it was key to the whole project. The longer I thought about the house being gone, the more I realized the missing book was the actual project. Not the book itself, or its contents: the missingness of the book. The absences around Larry, and, in turn, how Larry functioned as an absence, became the site of the work. The gaps









became my focus. I could never know if a fact was missing, so I just injected myself into all the gaps.

**BH** It's as if in this project, once something becomes fragmented, there is room for creativity. You let go of reconstructing the historical record accurately, and the fragment becomes a stimulus.

**KU** Yes, Freud writes that there is no time in the unconscious: everything that has ever happened to you is still happening, perpetually. While our conscious mind knits together a linear direction for our selves to move through, some abstraction of past or future that rescinds in the distance or peeks over the horizon, our unconscious exists outside of that narrative scaffolding. It just is, always, which is kind of horrific and also kind of beautiful. Classical philosophers also wrestled with these ideas; Aristotle had this idea that time only exists because observable change exists; it only comes into being when you point to it. Letting go of getting the narrative "right" also means letting go of narrative in its entirety. I'm interested in making work that can, maybe, briefly, shiver out of those structures, lean into a psychic space that isn't ordered in a narrative way.

I would say, too, that I was driven by a perverse need to put the body back together again. Maybe all fragments contain that need. The word *remember* evokes the word *remind*, bringing the mind forward, but it also sounds like *re-member*, to re-body, to make the body whole again. We could talk about the Larry doll. I had a young child at the time who was just getting into imaginary play and transitional objects, little substitutes of herself sitting around the house, which got me reading about Oskar Kokoschka's doll of Alma Mahler. When Mahler left him, Kokoschka had a furry, crazy-looking doll made of her, which he kept around to fill the gap. At the time, it made total sense to me that because "Larry" wasn't there, I needed to create some sort of embodiment of him. I knew his height and weight and eye color, but I still got things wrong while making the doll. It somehow became more idealized; he started to look more like my father, who was born the same year. The doll started out as just a linen head, and I would use him as a prop in photographs. Then I painted him. I placed him on a table in a show at CalArts and he became an art object. He also went into a video as a prop. Things became a little more complicated when I decided to make a silicone cast and put him in this charcoal-like substance. When you cast an original object, there's this idea of its animism: where is the *soul*, for lack of a better term,



of the object going when you make a copy? Or when you change the object, or change its context? I liked watching Larry move from substitute to subject to prop to object to sculpture to stylus to drawing to dust, I was interested in the material trajectory of the doll telling its own story about form, and that story becoming the story about memory.

**BH** Elsewhere you've spoken about the doll as a traditional art object that undergoes these unexpected transformations. When you think of what's traditional, are you thinking of a classical tradition of representing the human form? Is that something you want to push against or reject? I am thinking of your use of soft materials, and the way an object never seems to just be an object for you; it's a temporal process.

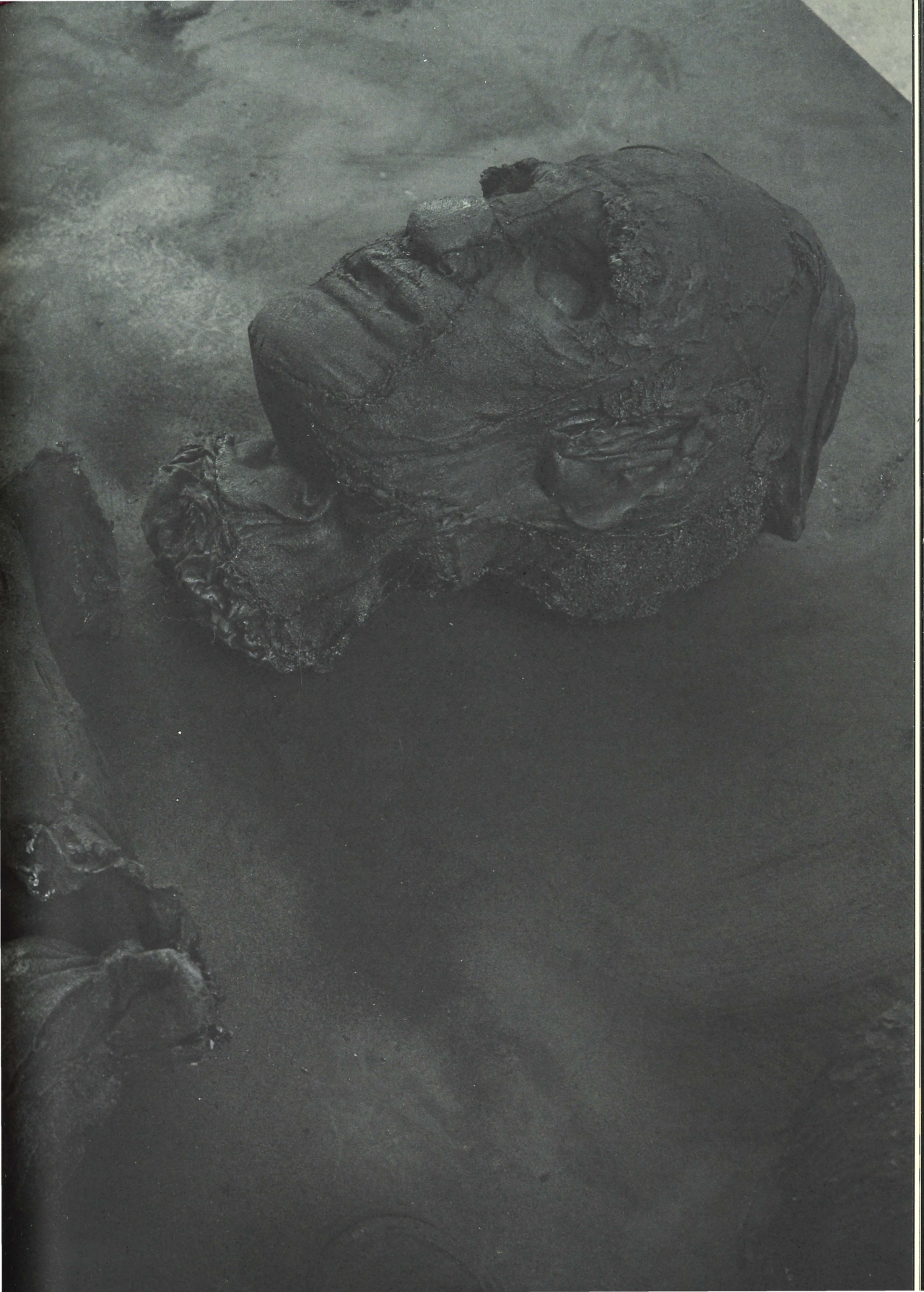
**KU** In a material sense, it's important to me that my modes of making sculpture are not traditional. A lot of them are very experimental. I try to make things in ways that haven't been done before. When I was younger, I thought art could be made of anything so long as it would support an idea. My molds move when I make them. Sometimes they end up as a hard cast sculpture, but they document a fluid moment that I'm not completely in control of. It's an absurd way to make a mold, but it's exciting because you never know quite what you're going to get. Looking at classical sculpture, I didn't even have the anxiety that comes from having something to rail against. That history became significant to me through artists I admire—it was only when Mike Kelley wrote his unbelievable text for his show "The Uncanny" at the Tate Liverpool [2004] about classical sculpture and the perversion of painting that I even started to think about it. When I make work, my focus is not on positioning myself in a particular way within an aesthetic history. That's just not a strategy for me. I'm not interested in progress, or newness, or trying to invent or expand on already established forms. I'm more, "What can I do with this material to make an idea exist in the world?" I try to keep a door open to all sorts of information because I'm not going toward an understanding of any one thing. The more confused I get, the more I realize I'm doing something.

**BH** Do you identify as a sculptor?

**KU** I don't identify with being a sculptor. I didn't study sculpture. I studied painting, and the fact that I make so many sculptures makes me laugh. I never meant my sculptures to be stand-alone, precious objects. Originally, I never made anything that wasn't already a site for performative acts: the Larry doll,











or *The Grotto* [2008–09], these were props, stages. I never thought about making an object as a thing in itself. It's true that my more recent work, which is more tied to the fold and the drape, without a doubt relates to classical sculpture. But that came about through a series of bizarre events, and I see those works almost as a kind of static showroom furniture, like the husk of a house, a place that's going to lead you to a larger project where the objects are actually used and worked in. I am visually furnishing this imaginary house. So those shapes, which people see, are like a precursor to what is about to come.

Gilles Deleuze has written about "the fold" as a spatial way to conceive of our own subjectivities. Most people distinguish a binary between the inside and the outside, but Deleuze proposes that the inside is only a fold of the outside, part of the same continuous material. I am invested in making objects that have neither an outside nor an inside, but sit in a place in between the two—maybe they are the cast of the stretched inside of a bucket, for example, or a couch pulled inside out and then back in again. I like the idea that there is an immanent surface between all things that is simply pinched or tugged, draped, pocketed, to make relationships or specificities. Classical sculpture was interested in drapery and fabric and how it concealed and uncovered simultaneously—a kind of paradoxical surface. The domestic is where this becomes the most poignant for me. What does the house conceal and uncover about the lives going on inside it? What emotional information is being tucked away in the crevices, and how can we unfold it, spread it flat, look at it clearly?

## I.I. THE NUDE

by Michael Squire

Uncovered. Exposed. Laid bare.

The nude is the defining legacy of classical art. Bodies, as we all know, are transient things. But Greek artists transformed our fragile frames into abiding aesthetic monument: tracing its real and imaginary contours, they rendered the body a figure in both the literal and metaphorical senses. This effectively divided Western visual culture along the lines of "his" and "hers." Just as the chiseled male torso has embodied a monumental ethical ideal (a notion of *looking* good as *being* good), so too have the fleshy curves of the ancient female nude given rise to an enduring ideology of femininity. For better or worse, we are still married to that heritage: whether we worry about looking too fat or too thin, strive to slim down or bulk up, resolve to exercise more or eat less, our modern thinking is conditioned by the ancient.

Set in stone, perhaps. But liquid nonetheless. For despite its monumentality, the classical nude possesses an abiding fluidity. In both its physical form and figurative significance, the nude has been reshaped and remolded, arrayed in the habitus of different receiving cultures. If the nudes of Western art history look back to their classical ancestors, they also entail

a creative reimagination of ancient precedents. In this sense, the nude is a figure that brings together both the corporeal and the conceptual: it interrogates how the classical past intersects with the present, as indeed how the present relates to the past.

The complexities of this engagement can already be seen in classical antiquity. Even in the first century BCE, we find "Greek" nudes being re-dressed in distinctively "Roman" guises: consider, for instance, those statues that combine nude bodies (male pseudo-athletes, or undressed Roman matrons) with distinctly different heads. Like so many subsequent kings, tyrants, and demagogues, Roman political leaders exploited classical precedents for political ends. Sometimes imitation involved stripping down completely, revealing the cultural credentials chiseled onto the nude body. At other times, the allusions worked more subtly: one thinks of the famous late first-century BCE statue of Augustus from Prima Porta, which at once quotes the muscled *cuirasse esthétique* of the fifth century BCE and yet also inscribes that body within a new imperial cosmology. In all such examples, we find nudity worn as costume: the attire dresses the subject in the ideology of its own appropriation.





As artistic gesture, nudity involves a push as well as a pull. Here we come not just to the liquidity of the nude as a figure of Western art, but also to the semantic fluidity between "nude" and "naked." Does the stripped body empower the depicted subject, or does it risk compromising and exposing? Is it cause for aesthetic celebration? Or is it a ridiculous embarrassment?

Within the postclassical cultural imaginary, such questions go hand in hand with the reconfigurations of Judeo-Christian theology. In imagining the figure of Jesus, Byzantine artists were among the first to wrestle with these dilemmas, sometimes stripping Jesus down to classical guise, other times covering up the body in shame. At stake were metaphysical questions about the very humanity/divinity of Christ himself/Himself.

Never were such questions more pressing than during the Renaissance. On the one hand, Renaissance artists gave figurative rebirth to the ancient nude: even at the moment of his Passion, Christ could be revealed as a Greek god. Likewise, in the hands of Botticelli, we find the female nude resurfacing from an ocean of ancient precedent, albeit dressed in a host of allegorical justifications. But the very forms that embodied the Renaissance's renewed "antiquity" simultaneously point to a religious remove: observe,

for example, how the models that figure the (re)birth of Venus resurface in imagery of Man's primordial fall and expulsion from the Garden of Eden. The familiar fig leaves of post-Renaissance art encapsulate this push-me-pull-me dynamic: in their attempts to cover up the body—to rescue the nude from nakedness—they figure the whole paradox of "Christian" classicism.

Such examples also lead back to the fluidity of the nude as artistic figure. In one sense, the very conventionality of artistic nudity incorporates the idea of distance from antiquity: it is a sign of self-conscious artifice, hardened conceit, and cultural remove. And yet, in another sense, the nude can tender the promise of proximity: what the clothed body makes culturally particular, the bare body generalizes across particularities of time and space. The rhetoric of desire—be that physical lust or more figurative longing—proves fundamental here, too. Behind the material physicality of the nude, after all, is a yearning to make its imagined ideals tangible and present. One might think of that pivotal moment in the opening of Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* (1938), her propagandistic film about the 1936 Berlin Olympics: as the camera rotates around a copy of Myron's *Discobolus*, we see the revered marble model turning into Aryan flesh and blood.

Try as art historians have to lay bare the history of the classical nude, no single story can explain it. Although the bodies of classical art are often associated with the

"naturalistic," "lifelike," and "real," it is also clear that they are idealized fabrications: no amount of bodybuilding, for example, can produce the "Adonis belt" that defines the male midriff in Greek sculpture. Periodically, there have been calls to resist this classical heritage—to start art over, to challenge residual assumptions, to do away with figurative fictions. Yet the lure of this material lies in its residual presence. Whether as ideal, anti-type, or point of departure, the classical nude remains with us. And operating behind its rigid presence is an inherent fluidity: perpetually poised between the solid and the liquid, no less than between the embodied and the conceptual, the ancient directs the ebb and flow of each successive modernity.



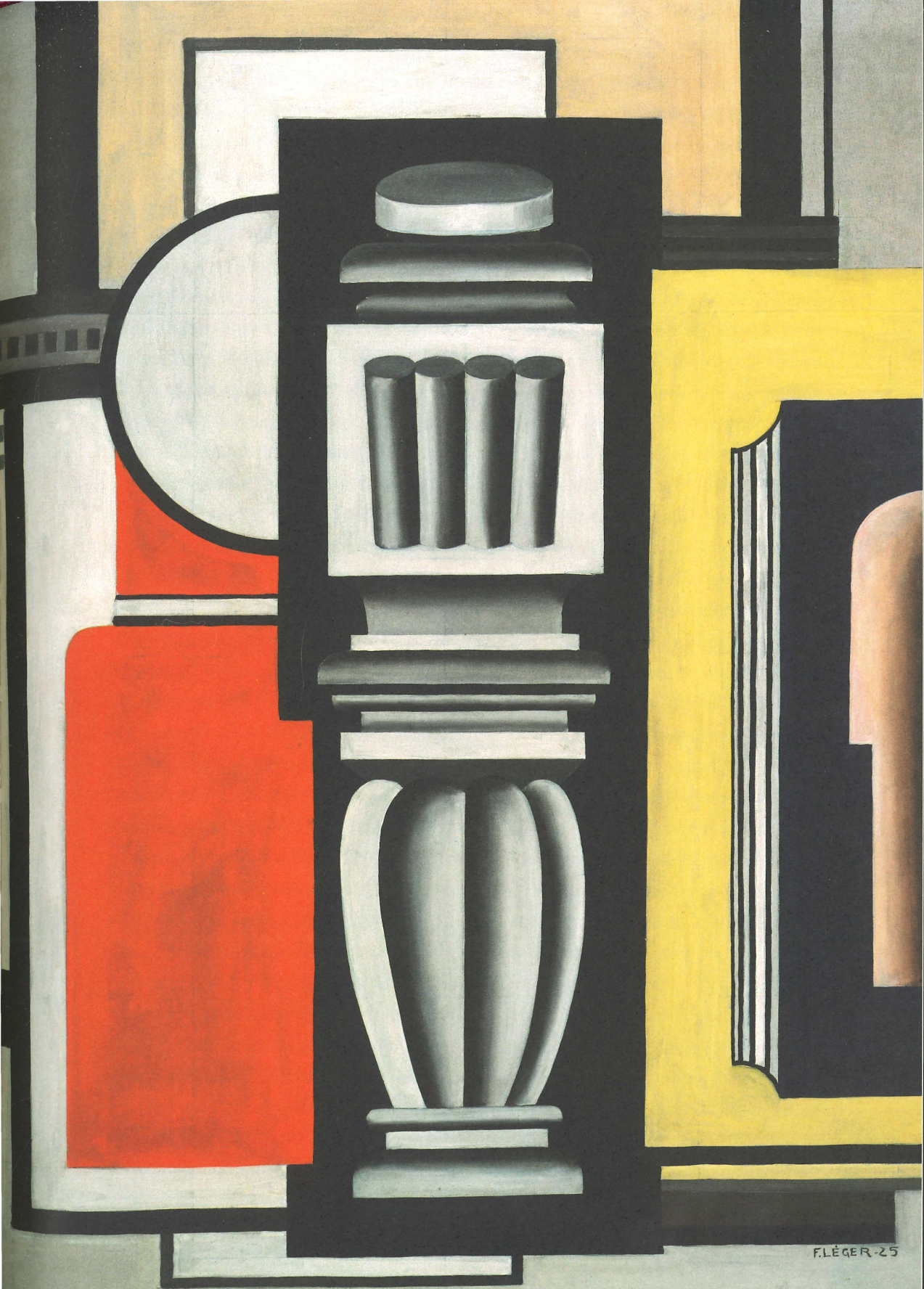
## I.II. THE ARCHAIC

by Polina Kosmadaki

The etymology of the word *archaic*, from the Greek *archē*, relates to notions of beginning, origin, and principle, but also to sovereignty, authority, and cause. Archaism played a key role in defining a new brand of "classicism" in modernist avant-garde art and criticism, one associated with the quest for primary creative instincts and a fascination with "primitivist" forms of spirituality. As a materialization of spontaneity and simplicity, but also of mystical thought and imagination, archaism favored the establishment of noncanonical links between high and low, old and new, "Western" and "primitive" art, and questioned classical art as the "authentic expression of Greek genius." For artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Constantin Brancusi, Alberto Giacometti, Amedeo Modigliani, and Man Ray, a new passion for the archaic allowed them to escape academic confinements, find new realms of inspiration, and invent ancestors beyond the classical.

During the period of the so-called historic avant-gardes, the superiority attributed to classical culture was replaced by accounts of the archaic and the "primitive" as part of a project to associate modern art with the origins of human creativity. Pre-classical Mediterranean art was linked to

non-European archaisms, to their simplicity and directness as much as to their mystical qualities and atemporal character. The commitment of modern, and especially Parisian, art circles to the archaic fostered a new relationship with the past that transcended the ambivalence of modern classicism, which was caught between the aesthetic precepts of a timeless, universal formalism and a backward-looking, reactionary "call to order." The interest in the archaic as a notion, an impulse, a style, a principle, a method, and even an ethos, led to the consideration of alternative ways of being in time and a new consciousness of contemporaneity. At a moment when mechanical reproduction and psychoanalysis had introduced new modes of narrating the world, the archaic was as much linked to a discourse on the liberating potential of primary instincts as it was, through archival and photographic practices, to early avant-garde reactions against static understandings of linear time and historical processes. The intellectual beginnings of such approaches can be traced to the writings of Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, and to the methods of such archaeologists as Waldemar Deonna and anthropologists such as Franz Boas.





Challenges to historical canons and evolutionary approaches to the study of culture were especially potent in the 1920s and '30s in the pages of lavishly illustrated periodicals such as *Cahiers d'art*, *Documents*, and *Minotaure*. There, beliefs about Greco-Roman antiquity and archaeological practice were revised through the application of antiacademic methodologies to visual and textual narratives. The editors and writers of these publications—Christian Zervos, Tériade, Georges Bataille, Carl Einstein—helped create a dialectic space by combining modern art, ethnology, archaeology, and anthropology. Zervos' journal *Cahiers d'art*, launched in 1926, pioneered this trend. Zervos rendered the archaic in full-page, black-and-white reproductions of modern, ancient, and "primitive" works, aspiring to reevaluate and "do justice" to pre-classical art, its "instinctive impulses," its appeal to "passionate souls," and its taste for pure expression and pure poetics, which, to him, reflected the modern spirit. Archaic art was no longer to be conceived of as an interval between prehistoric art and the "plastic art of the great century"—that is, the fifth century BCE—but was to be appreciated for its intuitive knowledge, magical charm, architecture, tenderness, and closeness to "still intact" originary instincts. *Cahiers d'art* was poised between the dominant modernist concepts of purity

and mathematical abstraction and the Dionysian myth of origins, which Zervos inflected with a sense of medieval mysticism inspired by his student work on Neoplatonic philosopher Michael Psellos and Zervos' own readings of Nietzsche. The turn to the archaic aimed to overturn fixed rules designed to fend off—in Zervos' words—the odd, the unusual (*insolite*), and the respect for the sacred as the primordial source of aesthetic pleasure (*jouissance*). Pursuing his Nietzschean and Neoplatonic affiliations, Zervos aspired to locate areas where elements of the past might penetrate contemporary life in forms that would allow them to "re-emerge within us as new as in their first day."

Photography played a particularly important role in the move to decontextualize modern and ancient works and to replace the classical with the archaic. The layout of *Cahiers d'art* used photographic juxtapositions to highlight what Zervos saw as universal archaic features, such as directness, platitude, simplicity, materiality, restraint, bareness, and immobility. Chronologically and geographically diverse images and accounts were thus organized as corpora of photographs wherein the "ethnographic" comparative method replaced linear art historical narratives. By investing in photography's capacity to create both affinities and disjunctions, and by photographically indexing the relationship between the



archaic and the modern in an abstracted historical context, *Cahiers d'art* proposed a kind of formal invention based on the dialectical juxtaposition of elements and poetic leaps across time. Works from the present and the past were integrated in an open-form visual system that oscillated between temporalities, charting an untimely version of archaism across various cultural systems. The comparatist method emerged as part of a strategy for thinking about the archaic as a transhistorical concept with *cosmopoietic* ambitions. And inversely, the archaic impulse, as enacted in periodicals such as *Cahiers d'art*, marked a new consciousness of the present that identified with the avant-garde's pursuit of the primitive. The archaic therefore yielded new modes of thinking about contemporariness by "splitting it up into several times, by introducing into time an essential dishomogeneity," which had the effect of "transforming it and putting it in relation with other times."

In *Cahiers d'art*, the "atemporal" usage of artworks and the "synchronic" approach to artistic systems were the guiding principles behind the creation of an archive of fragmentary archaic forms—not only of artworks, but also of bodies, machines, and buildings. In this we see how the *archē* also directly relates to the "archive," a notion that links, as Derrida analyzed in *Archive Fever*, the physical, historical, and ontological

principles of *commencement* to the principle of *commandment*, where authority and social order are exercised. By creating a visual archive of the present and the past that survives within it and by pioneering its own comparatist method, *Cahiers d'art* challenged the concepts of historicity, epistemic purity, evolution, and pure rationalism. In times of moral and spiritual crisis, Zervos concluded, this had the power to provoke an "emancipatory movement" that might overcome the "moral deficit" of industrialized society by generating collective consciousness and individual responsibility.

### I.III. ANIMISM

by Spyros Papapetros

Perhaps the most pervasive similarity between classicism's survival and the revival of animism in modernity lies in how indiscriminately influential both have been. Despite its etymological root, the Greek *anemos*, animism does not only consist of air; in the last two centuries it has engulfed social networks, artworks, and the words used to describe them. Propelled by such commotion, Edward Tylor's archaic doctrine of souls gradually liquefied into the modern phenomenon of *animation*, a fluid process that restores life to natural species, man-made things, and philosophical ideas that had been considered dead, extinct, or inanimate. Following the equanimous principles of monism, animism maintains that nothing should be excluded from the prerogative of life: not plants or minerals, nor the man-made things that had previously been left hovering outside the territory of the living. Now these things push violently to get in, acquiring faces and voices, reviving ancient anthropomorphism in order to enunciate a claim for a more indiscriminate distribution of vitality.

In this equalizing expansion, the presence of air or soul, *anima*, is largely invisible because of the ontological indistinction it imposes on the inert object it revivifies. There are only

a limited number of ways to indicate that an animated being and/or thing is breathing under an inorganic surface. Aligned in visual strategy, classicism and animism reappear across mediums in the fluttering corners of antique drapery—a marmoreal core partially mobilized under a vibrant surface. Previously attached to the convulsing limbs of ancient maenads, the same agitated fabric now turns into a flag with which to guide an army of newly revived characters. Just as nineteenth-century biologists searched for the origins of organic life in mineral fossils, scientists of culture sought to dissect these fabric appendages in order to ascertain the forces behind their riotous movement. The very inability to locate a cause for the animation of their inorganic surface triggered the reanimation of antique allegorical devices, such as “the face of the wind”—the stratagem that Leon Battista Alberti encouraged painters to apply next to their representations of swirling hair and fabrics. Behind this anthropomorphized windscreen, antiquity poses as the source of modernity's animist menagerie.

Besides cladding the soul, animism also possesses the very core of things and reorganizes their inner structures. “The soul is the architect of its own



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body," declares nineteenth-century epistemologist Albert Lemoine in his account of the animist and vitalist writings of the seventeenth-century medical philosopher Georg Ernst Stahl (the writer to whom Tylor would attribute his use of the term *animism* in his *Primitive Culture*). This "architectonic soul" (*âme architectonique*) has the capacity to arrange or derange all animate beings by "furnishing" them with desires, ideas, and passions. Such animate architecture finds expression in two main structures: the human body and the tree, the structural contiguity of both attested to in a long sequence of arborified anatomical diagrams depicting arterial and neurological networks. The morphological convergence between trees and bodies might explain why Daphne, the antique nymph who "petrified" into a tree (yet whose heartbeat could still be heard under the bark), was resuscitated in modernist—predominantly Surrealist—circles as animism's reticent spokesperson. In his seventh seminar on the ethics of psychoanalysis, Jacques Lacan describes Daphne's petrification as a kind of "architecture"; an arboreal "presencing of pain" in which tectonic processes of psychological and bodily defense solidify their origins in both historical practices and mythological narratives of building. James Frazer's late nineteenth-century anthropological epic *The Golden Bough*

describes trees and forests not only as the loci of a cyclical political economy that bonds nature with human society, but also as the first temples of animist religion and participatory association. Whenever the soul is in peril and has to be hidden for safety, a tree or a block of stone is usually chosen and endowed with animate properties. Even after a tree was cut, chopped into pieces, and made into a hut, the malignant spirits inside the wood had to be propitiated with bloody rituals so that prospective human inhabitants would be able to cohabitate with tree demons. This vital "tribute" to the tree's erstwhile animistic power is rehearsed in the first theoretical treatises of (archi-)tectonics from the mid-nineteenth century, which emerge almost concurrently with comparative anthropological descriptions.

In his extensive monograph *The Tree Worship of the Greeks* from 1856, Karl Bötticher, the preeminent theorist of Greek tectonics, describes the tree in ancient Greek culture as a "comprehensive apparatus" that represents both the object and the space of animist worship. The vegetal organism itself straddles the categories of image, statue, implement, cladding, ornament, and spatial enclosure. The tree's animism lies in the sympathetic overlapping of these different ontological categories, as well as in the human artifacts that merge under its foliage. If a lyre or syrinx is hung on

its branches, the tree reverberates like a musical instrument, whereas if spears and shields are deposited on its trunk, the tree acquires the skeuomorphic status of a military apparatus. When the tree becomes overburdened with implements, a small structure is built next to it as a treasury for supernumerary offerings. The more those objects pile up, the larger the building becomes. So architecture grows not only from a tree, but also from the excesses of human industry and the drive for territorial accumulation and expansion. Eventually, as colonies are established around trees, which remain symbolically connected to their sponsoring cities, the tree's tectonic capacity extends from that of a singular edifice to that of a collective urban organism. The tree's civic legacy is commemorated in yearly festivals with tree-carrying processions (*dendrophorïae*), in which branches or entire trunks are paraded through a city's main avenue in the arms of the faithful. Via these arboreal relics, the city is reunited with the ancient forest, which now flows within the ossified pathways of an urban network.

In classicism's lively sartorial reinvention in the nineteenth century, animism enters the (Anthropo-)scene as an antique aerial current agitating the fabric accessories on the periphery of ancient statues. In its less boisterous tectonic reinvention by Bötticher,

that same animist current reenters antiquity's core through the central avenue of its civic spaces. The essence of this "architectural soul" is no longer aerial, but an alluvial stream of derooted plant remnants eroding the foundations of classicism's built monuments and epistemological structures.

## I.IV. IMMORTALITY

by Christopher S. Wood

The emblem of immortality, of deathlessness, shared by god and artwork, is the statue. The nude or adorned body in marble or bronze was born again in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. At that point, the ancient artwork met its modern double. In his notes on art collections in the Veneto and Lombardy, made over several decades in the early sixteenth century, the Venetian connoisseur Marcanton Michiel described dozens of statuettes: Jupiters, Hercules, female nudes, children, fauns in bronze or marble. His commentary in most cases amounted to a simple binary assignment: either it is *opera antica* or *opera moderna*.

The body reproduced in three dimensions dominates time because it has the best chance, better than any other subject of art and better than any text, of simply being grasped for what it is, no matter when and where it is seen.

The capacity of the represented body to enact immortality is a paradox. If the body's physical instability bounds human life, why should the sculpted body figure imperishability? This is the riddle of ancient Greek statuary, the images of the gods and heroes, that Hegel described as "the actualization of classical art in history." The Greek gods were *hoi aei ontes*, "those who exist forever."

Eternal life was their defining attribute. But because the living body is already marked by death, foretelling its own decay, it is difficult to grasp the concept of eternal life. Therefore the gods were also defined as the deathless ones, the *athanatoi*. This is a double negative: they are the ones who lack a lack. But is there not a place within the human sphere that provides a positive ground for the hypothesis of immortality, namely the youthful, beautiful person who leaves an impression of *life itself*, of pure fluid vitality, the precious fluid which in rites and folklore and superstition is jealously hoarded? Beautiful youth is the liquid moment when the human being does not seem "to bear the mark of a congenital infirmity," the "stigma" of mortality.

The irony is that only a youthful death preserves youthful beauty from decay—or ravishment by the gods, as the tomb inscriptions had it:

I am Antoninus, I lie here mute under  
the tombstone. . . .

Zeus [carried] me away as the new  
Phrygian Ganymede. . . .

—Aizanoi in Anatolia, 247/48 CE

The inscription assimilates the youth to the gods, and yet youth itself had been the model for those very gods.





The template for the gods, before it became the desirable youth, was the ancestor or the hero. People *became* gods by dying. Ancestors and heroes were dead and buried and yet their souls persisted. "Culture" amounted to the effort to keep them alive through song, ritual communication, effigies, and tomb cults. The gods themselves had to *become immortal* in order to transcend their status as heroes. The gods' immortality was therefore never really secure. The most prestigious portal to the divine sphere, the oracle at Delphi, Apollo's mouthpiece, sat directly over the tomb of the chthonic deity Python: one god had built his sanctuary on the tomb of another. The injunction "Know thyself" inscribed on the wall of the Delphic sanctuary, reminding devotees that they were mere mortals, testified to some insecurity on the part of the gods about their status.

Once the desirable youth became the model for the god, there was no need to promote ancestors and heroes to divine status. After that, you only had to "picture" the gods, using real people as models. This presented a problem: since immortality has no positive marker or attribute other than fluidic health and wholeness, it is difficult to tell the difference between a mortal and an immortal if both are young and beautiful. Statues solve this puzzle: you recognize a god because she or he only ever appears as

a statue. You recognize the god *as artwork*. The quality of divinity, or immortality, is matched to the ratio between a real human being and an image of that human being, the ratio we could call *artistic difference*. Vacuousness and lack of spirit, usually associated with idols, are in fact the attributes of classical art. The "classical effect" involves incompleteness. The ideal body is achieved through processes of subtraction. First clothes are removed, then histories, then finally expressions and personalities. Eventually, pure inwardness is left, a vulnerability.

This artwork's difference is its ability to *acknowledge beauty*. It is the artwork's gesture of recognition of the nonrelativity of youthful beauty, beauty's resistance to critique, that is mistaken for immortality. For such an acknowledgment is not a statement that can be negated, but rather an act, equal to itself, uninterpretable.

The art theorist Gabriele Guercio suggests that some recent artworks project immortality by hinting at "a self-contained, chaotic realm . . . subtracted from viewpoints anchored in a determined world or dimension of being." Guercio questions Hegel's verdict that the breakdown of complicity between men and gods as concretized in Greek art precludes the moderns from ever again creating art that successfully contests the "determined world." For Hegel, the desirable body of Greek art only reminds us of art's lost intimacy with spirit. Today, two centuries

after Hegel, it is even more difficult to grasp art's "chaotic" temporality, because beauty is no longer the unquestioned medium of the proposition that art models the trajectories of eternity. Modernism in art disabled the prompt of corporeal beauty, subordinating it to an artistic beauty that adheres to the artwork as a whole and is no longer coordinated with erotic desire. But the children of the modernists have activated still further prompts, multiplying the temporalities of art, withdrawing from evolutionary time, and inviting the ravishing body back inside the frame. They have licensed Greek art to summon and resummon, in unforeseen ways, the conjecture that immortality is a privileged content of art.



## I.V. P N E U M A

by Hal Foster

*Pneuma* is the Greek word for “breath” or “air,” “spirit” or “soul.” The American artist Charles Ray points us to a splendid instance, at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, of its evocation in sculpture, a Cycladic grave stela of a young girl (ca. 450–40 BCE). “She has a bird in her hand that she’s about to kiss,” Ray comments. “I find it so touching, and fundamentally sculptural—this bird and girl and kiss and breath. Everything is in relief, and the only space that flows through and around is between her mouth and the bird in her hand.” For Ray, such pneumatic passages are not only fundamentally sculptural but also profoundly philosophical—they are where art quickens into knowledge—and there are touches of this quickening in his own work. It is present, for example, in his machined aluminum relief *Girl on Pony* (2015)—in her bashful smile, proud posture, and clenched hands. At the same time, there is a touch of death there, too; perhaps it is the same touch, one in which, as in the *Gradiva* made famous by Wilhelm Jensen and Freud, movement and arrest, life and death, combine uncannily. *Girl on Pony* might be derived from a family photograph, but like the Cycladic relief, it ends up as a grave stela.

A funereal feeling suffuses another Ray relief, *Two Boys* (2010), produced in fiberglass. And it, too, underscores how odd it is for a contemporary sculptor to turn to this classical form, the most pictorial of all sculptural modes. Modern aesthetics long privileged painting; in fact, the traditional critique of sculpture—at least from Diderot through Baudelaire to Clement Greenberg—was that it is not enough like painting: it presents too many viewpoints, and so involves the viewer too much in movement and bodiliness, time and worldliness. Thus, at the end of the nineteenth century, the German artist and aesthete Adolf von Hildebrand advanced the relief as a model for all sculpture in the hope that the medium might thereby be rendered more pictorial, and so more unified, in its effects. In his recourse to classical relief, however, Ray works to reclaim the form for sculptural complexity.

“The conventions inherent in a relief are both interesting and useful to me,” Ray writes of *Two Boys*.

Modeling form and its surrounding space necessitates a relationship between the work and the position of the viewer with respect to the work. An illusion is maintained by careful





orchestration of both pictorial and sculptural elements. When approaching a relief tangentially or viewing it up close, distortions in the surface of the form arise. The pictorial experience disintegrates.

Here Ray offers an initial illusion, which he calls the "story of two boys." Viewed frontally, the relief is as pictorial as a family portrait, one that suggests the similarities and the dissimilarities between the two brothers (for that is what the boys are). Yet looked at close up or tangentially, from the sides, the relief becomes more like an object and "the pictorial experience disintegrates." In its place come "distortions," Ray says elliptically, that "speak to the landscape of childhood," by which I take him to mean that, viewed as sculpture, the relief opens up a philosophical space beyond the family picture. Into this space then flows a different sense of time, one tinged by mortality (since at least the Romantics childhood has presented "an intimation of immortality" that implies its opposite as well). And, in fact, drained of color and deprived of pupils as the boys are, this relief, too, is as much a grave stela as it is a family picture.

This crossing of life and death is also active in the sarcophagus, another ancient form that Ray reanimates (he has drawn on the classical figure and

the equestrian statue as well). The sarcophagus is evoked, for example, in *Mime* (2014), *Sleeping Woman* (2012), and *Baled Truck* (2014), the last of which suggests body, coffin, and instrument of death all in one (the first work is aluminum, the other two are solid stainless steel, and all are machined).

In *Tomb Sculpture* (1957), Erwin Panofsky distinguished between a Greek type of sarcophagus, which commemorates a past life, and so presents the figure as if alive, full of *pneuma*, and an Egyptian type, which anticipates an afterlife, and so locates the figure beyond this world, as an immortal soul, or *ka*. If there is *pneuma* in *Girl on Pony* as well as in *Two Boys*, then in *Sleeping Woman* Ray "tried to sculpt the kines-  
thetic aspect of her *ka*." Panofsky notes a third type of ancient sarcophagus, too, the Etruscan, which often presents the dead as though asleep, and so falls between the Greek and the Egyptian types. Perhaps *Sleeping Woman* is in this Etruscan lineage, but her sleep, like her body, is heavy, as though it could last for an Egyptian eternity. The sleep evoked in *Mime* is lighter, more ambiguous, more Etruscan. "Is his sleep a form of miming," Ray asks, "or is he miming sleep?"

The miming of life in death and vice versa is the sculptural business of the sarcophagus across its variations; it is a "haunting" that Ray often grapples



with. It is as though he sees figurative sculpture per se as uncanny, in the sense that it cannot help but confuse the appearance of the animate with the reality of the inanimate, pneumatic life with compressive death. And it is for this reason above all that Ray turns to classical forms. Consider a few final examples. Like classical art, his sculpture also stretches, stylistically, between realism and idealism: *Young Man* (2012), in solid stainless steel, is “both a portrait and an abstraction,” Ray tells us, and the same is true of *Aluminum Girl* (2003). So, too, these works speak to the cherished miracle of classical art, the invention of *contrapposto*, that hip-heavy counterpose that first imparted a sense of quickening to the figure, which Ray updates with hipster models of his own acquaintance. Other pieces call up other classical postures—*Shoe Tie* (2012) recovers the concentration of attention captured in the famous *Spinario*, or *Boy with Thorn*. Clearly, Ray is keen to (re)discover what makes a gesture eloquent or a pose iconic. This is a matter not of overt citation but of indirect allusion, and it might be related to the formulas of pathos (*Pathosformeln*) that Aby Warburg traced from the classical period to the Renaissance and beyond. In any case, the classical according to Ray is not a simple origin but a Warburgian recurrence, a *pneuma* that is made most articulate by its opposite—death.

## I.VI. WASTE

by Dan-el Padilla Peralta

We all emerge in the funk.—Cornel West

Put some *stank* on it!—Various

To contend with waste—the excremental variety in particular—is to see the ideal plop to the ground and the beautiful funkified. I want to sing of liquid antiquity's capacity to accommodate the phase changes of funky odor into liquid stench into hardened human and animal waste. If the Anthropocene culminates in global environmental calamity, we will have brought it on by failing to manage waste: the excess emissions in the air, all the sewage in rivers and oceans, the staggering quantities of crap. Cow-faced Hera will have plenty to say about the final outcome: we are being undone in part by the colossal negative externalities of bovine flatulence; the methane emissions of the cows we raise for slaughter are killing us. Talk about deadly smells.

Waste is surprisingly slippery in Homer: at the funeral games for Patroklos, Ajax is tantalizingly close to claiming victory over Odysseus in the footrace until he slips on the dung of the oxen earlier sacrificed by Achilles; as Odysseus passes him by for the win, Ajax is spitting out excrement, mouth and nose clogged with shit. Not only

is one man's triumph another's humiliation; enabled by fatal violence (all those sacrificial oxen shitting themselves in fear, their viscera uncontrollably voiding after death), the excremental as spectacle spreads out into the far corners of the text and into lives glossed as sub- or para-epic. The laughter at Ajax's fall and befouling winks back to the communal laughter—tinged with sadness—at Odysseus' manhandling of the upstart Thersites. Fecal waste resurfaces at moments of heart-eating grief: Priam moaning and rolling around in shit at the sight of Hector's corpse being dragged in the dust; or Odysseus shedding a silent tear at the sight of his beloved dog Argos, weakly wagging his tail from a mound of manure.

Plato's Socrates, the sanitizer of sanitizers, has no patience for this cow shit, enlisting his interlocutors in the *Republic* to petition Homer and the other poets not to represent heroes in mourning or Priam spinning around in feces. Ignoble are these scenes, Socrates complains, lacking in the appropriate ethical uplift; and so here another story begins—or can be said to begin—of the drive to





conceal the funk of ordure. The simple strategy is to omit, the more textually nimble to write out: among Virgil's most conspicuous "Homeric effects" is having the outcome of the Nisus-Euryalus race hinge on another slip, this time not on the feces but on the blood of sacrificed animals; many centuries later, Alexander Pope simply erased the fecal in his translation of the *Iliad*.

In tiptoeing around animal and human waste we dodge a basic historical fact: that, for the many millennia before the Haber-Bosch process made commercial fertilizer possible, dung was what made the world go round—it was what made the feeding of human mouths possible. Argos breathes his last on mule and cow dung that has been piled up before the gates of Odysseus' house for servants to take away and use as manure. As the intensive field surveys of the 1970s and 1980s documented more and more artifact halos radiating outward from ancient Greek sites, the "manuring hypothesis" that won over archaeologists credited these halos to the spreading-out of human and animal dung—first gathered in pits and mounds into which broken pottery and assorted other household rubbish had also been tossed—as fertilizer for land under cultivation. Questions lingered: just how much shit was involved, and who was doing the shitting? With potsherds surviving to mark where the manure

had once been, waste morphed into a medium with a message; long-term networks of individual and communal labor, human-animal-plant collaboration and symbiosis, and artisanal/technological innovation were brought back to life.

These *longue durée* semiotics of ordure intersect with highly contingent pungenencies. Recent representations of a certain pumpkin-complexioned occupant of American high office mark one place where scat-invective oozes across the boundary lines separating antiquity from modernity: from the turdification of today's politicians it is only a small step to Aristophanes' *Peace*, with its dung beetle consuming so much crap; or Seneca's pumpkinifying Claudius, relieving himself with the deathbed utterance "Poor me, I think I shat myself" to cap a human life that had crapped on everything. Assimilating the prominent to the fecal makes for a good laugh. Yet relief is not always relief, especially when the expulsion and management of human waste precipitate explosive personal and societal tensions. Sure, that Roman relief from Aquileia in which Jupiter brandishes his thunderbolts at the poor soul who made the mistake of shitting in the wrong place is funny; those Pompeian graffiti admonishing passersby to get a move on and take their dumping somewhere else tickle the funny bone too. But to do full justice to the forms of privilege and oppression

that cluster around waste relief will entail pushing past the diagnostics of humor, given the range of strategies ancient and modern for plotting waste disposal and management along status, class, and gender lines.

The final word goes to the Ostian Tavern of the Seven Sages, those repositories of Solonic/colonic wisdom. "To shit better, Solon stroked his belly," reads the caption above the sage depicted on the left side of the south wall; "Thales advises those having a hard time shitting to keep straining," reads another caption on the right. *Our* relief will come with a more profound concern for funky fecality—and for the many whose lives and shits have long been sidelined by the constipated classicism of impossibly idealized bodies.

## I.VII. CENTAUR

by Mark Payne

The *anthrōpos* is the being for whom its own being is a care. The horse is the being for whom the being of others is a care. In the *Iliad*, it is only horses that register atrocity in general. Human beings react to this death and that death in which their own being is intimately involved, but horses register the scale of the event as a relation to atrocity in general, a settling in and sedimentation of the atrocity as a whole.

The *anthrōpos* and the horse come together in the centaur, where the figures of care are as uneasily conjoined as their two anatomies. The centaurs' violence is a poem, the original poem of force. They are "the wild beasts of the mountains" who fought with the strongest of men in ancient days. But Chiron is the epitome of gentleness. The huge centaur snuggles the young Achilles and the hero wraps his arms around him. Even when his mother is present he prefers the breast he knows.

Achilles remembers the centaur on his way to Troy, to the deaths of men and horses:

Father taught me how to travel  
through the wilderness with him. He  
had big steps. I didn't cry when rocks  
smashed to pieces in the creeks. The  
silence of the forest didn't scare me.

When I was twelve I could outrun  
deer and horses. Chiron used to chase  
me through canyons and when we  
were done he would carry me on his  
shoulders. I can't quite remember  
what it was like. Once he made me  
stand in the river in winter. He didn't  
used to kiss me unless I came home  
covered in blood. My mother knows  
the rest.

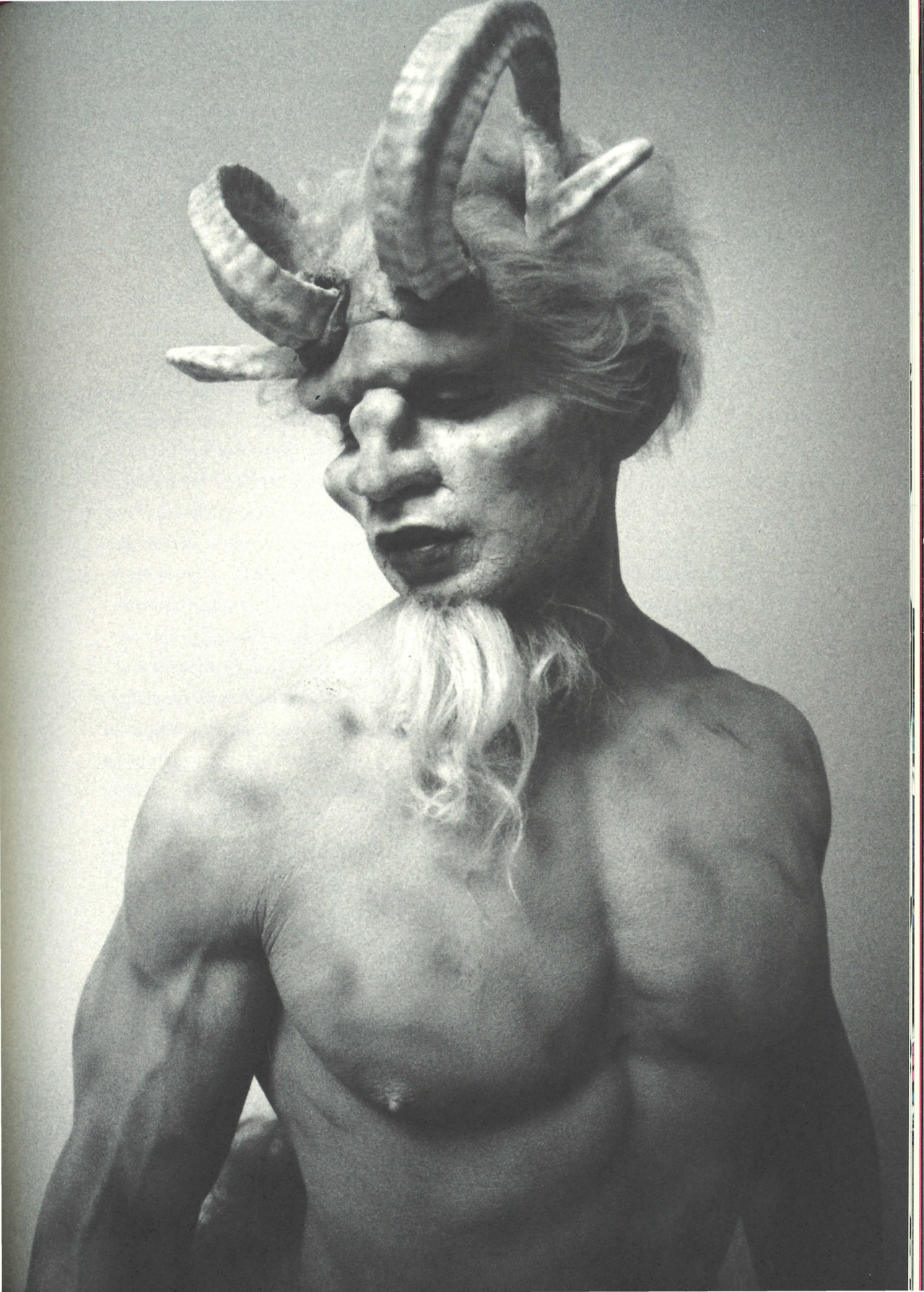
They can't quite remember what it  
was like, their poem. "What other baby  
grew up crawling through freshly dug  
snow?" Chiron wonders.

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Friedrich Hölderlin remembers the  
centaurs as the onset of enlivening  
force:

The concept of centaurs is probably  
the spirit of a stream, as long as the  
railway makes a border, by force, on  
the originally pathless, monitored  
earth. His image is therefore at points  
of Nature, where the shore is rich as  
to rocks and grottoes, particularly  
in places where originally leaving  
the current chain of mountains it  
had to tear through their direction  
transverse, and in caves of the earth





for lactating animals. The waters were craving their direction, broke through at a point where the mountains that included him most easily hung together. The designed wave pushed the rest of the pond, and the way of life on the banks changed to the assault of the forest. True centaur songs are sung with the spirit of the river, as the Greek Chiron also taught Achilles the strings.

Crow Indians remember their horses as beings for whom the being of others is a care:

To the Crow a horse is everything. It's in your blood. When I was growing up a horse was always there that you could ride and you'd play with the horse all your life to where you can trust a horse, to where your shadow and the horse's shadow are one.

I have been told that the white man, who is almost a god, and yet a great fool, does not believe that the horse has a spirit [soul]. This cannot be true. I have many times seen my horse's soul in his eyes. And this day on that knoll I knew my horse understood. I saw his soul in his eyes.

N. Scott Momaday, who calls the form of life of the Plains Indians horse nations "centaur culture," tells of a hunting horse that died of shame. He also tells of

Buffalo Bill and Secretariat, and how the exotic old people of his tribe, who spoke only Kiowa, wore their hair in braids, and imaged for him the "bygone and infinitely exciting time of the centaurs."

Which is also the time of care:

Edward Curtis preserved for us the unmistakable evidence of our involvement in the universe. Curtis was acutely alive to evanescence; indeed, in a real sense it is his subject. The portraits here are of people whose way of life is coming rapidly to an end. We see the full awareness of this in their eyes. And yet these visages are not to be defined in terms of despair. Rather, there is a general information of fortitude, patience, and something like assent, and above all composure and valor. In the face of such a man as Slow Bull, for example, there seem etched the very principles of the warrior ideal: bravery, steadfastness, generosity, and virtue. We do not doubt that he is real in his mind and heart, in his word and in his vision. The same can be said of the portraits of Red Cloud, Chief Joseph, and Bear's Belly—in his bear robe—there is an amalgam of man and wilderness, an equation that is a definition of the American Indian in relation to nature. And yet, in all of these photographs there is a privacy so profound as to be inviolable. A Navajo weaver sits at her loom before a canyon wall. She is a silhouette; her loom is a

geometry that seems essential to her being, organic, the extension of her hands into the earth itself. A young girl in her finery stands before her play tipi; she is every young girl who has ever lived upon the earth.

An amalgam: a centaur in the flesh. Henry David Thoreau imagined that "the rays of Greek poetry struggle down to us, and mingle with the sunbeams of the recent day." And here in fact they do.



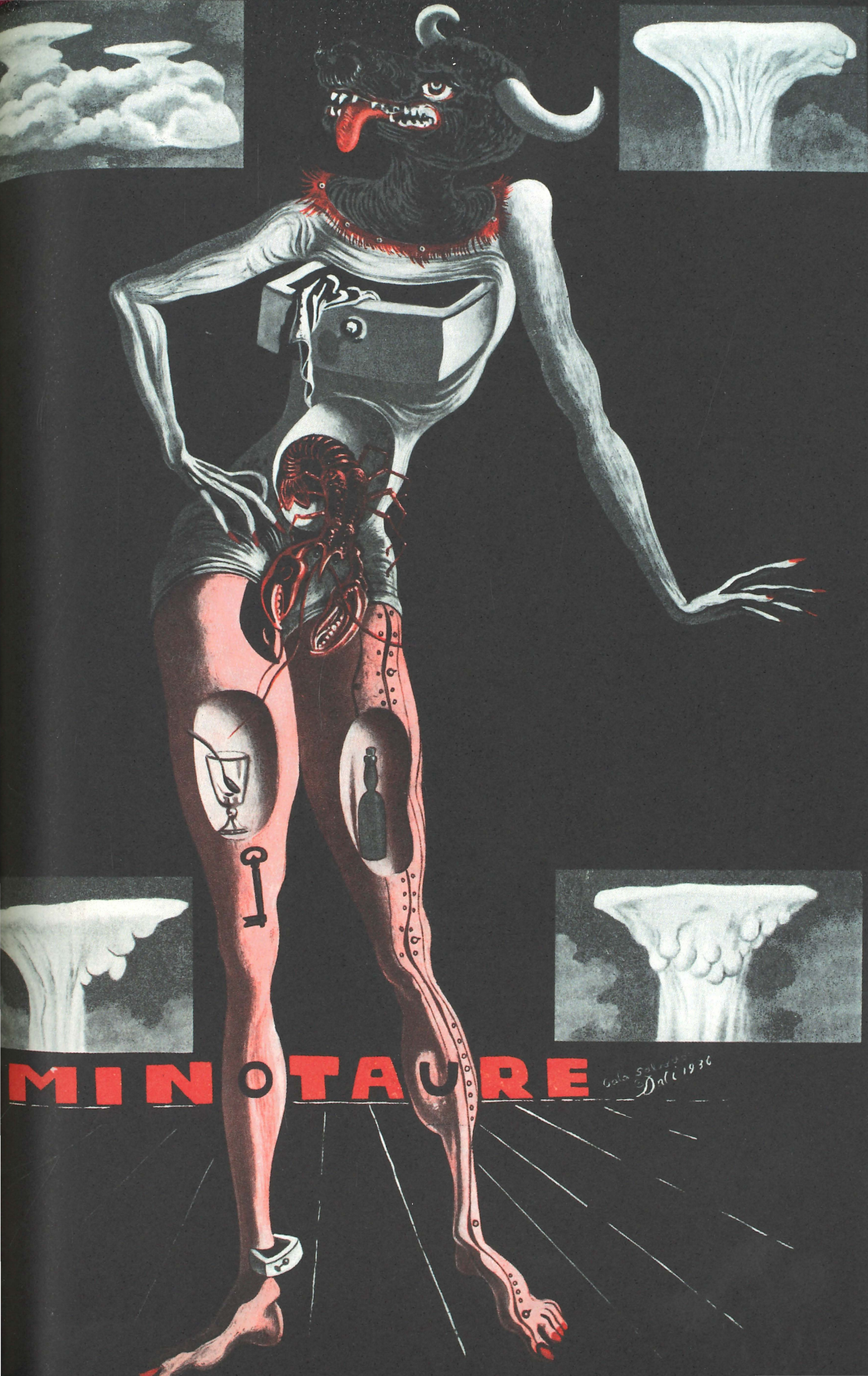
## I.VIII. MINOTAUR

by Effie Rentzou

The Minotaur, half man half animal, unveils hidden aspects of "Greece": a Greece invested in animality, a Greece in which the human, center of Hellenic civilization, is displaced by and replaced with a hybrid creature. Like the practice of archaeology, the figure of the Minotaur holds a certain violent appeal in its capacity to bring to the surface what lies latent beneath, that which has stubbornly survived from the past—material remnants or hidden monsters that modify idealistic perceptions of classical antiquity or humanity. In resisting both representation and signification with its hybrid monstrosity, the Minotaur stands against the triumph of the Athenian Theseus, and with him the triumph of classical philosophy. To the classical human figure of perfection, central to the Protagorean world, the Minotaur presents a different figure that blurs the line between human and nonhuman, human and animal, thus asking us to reconsider the notion of the human altogether and, through a questioning of historical tradition, the very notion of humanism itself.

The Minotaur's fantastic corporeality underscores the fact that the natural body is a construction, a reassembly of the organic, classical body, a thing attached to assumptions of wholeness,

perfection, and harmony. The materiality of the hybrid creates a space for restructuring the human body similar to the space that the French avant-garde in and around Surrealism—from Salvador Dalí and René Magritte to André Masson and Max Ernst—opened up during the post-World War I return to figuration. Their exploration did not seek to restate the integrity of the human figure, then decimated by the violence of the war, nor did the Surrealist body in any way resemble the idealized, neoclassical, humanistic body that appeared in the art and imagination of the late 1920s and '30s as a symptom of the *retour à l'ordre*. The Minotaur and its various visual transformations illustrate the Surrealist aim perfectly, as they become the terrain for testing the malleability, the softness, and the indeterminacy of the human form; its openness to change, to decay or regeneration; its porousness and constant exchange with its surroundings. From the monster to the human, the figure that results can be described in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's terms as a *corps sans organes*: it is not a body without organs per se, but rather a body without organism, one that resists both physical and social organization. It is a body constantly being reinvented, a body of potentialities, a nonhierarchical body.



# MINOTAURE

Gala Svalby  
Dall 1936





The human body as a virtuality that defies organization and hierarchical structure is an anarchic construction of immanence; it is open to intensities and becomings, a body of desire. This is not an autistic, regressive body; on the contrary, it is a body that is open to liquidity, to connections and passages. It resists physical organization and possibly social and political hierarchies.

While mechanomorphized humans, automata, and mechanical prostheses have all been associated with the avant-garde aesthetic paradigm of the human body as assemblage, the Minotaur challenges the man-machine by turning to the organicity of the human figure. This goes against the avant-garde paradigm of "less human" and constructs a different paradigm, one of "more human" — perhaps even "too human" — that contrasts and challenges the Greek *metron* while still taking the new, excessive human as the measure of all things. The Minotaur thus permits the collective construction of a polymorphous, polyvalent body; one that's old, young, mutilated, extended, vegetal, animal, twisted, stretched, chopped, and multiplied. Furthermore, the human body as a site of constant rearrangement — a nonhierarchical and non-submissive "body without organs" — is the visual anchor for a conceptual and political universalist humanism that may be seen to

oppose the universalism of various iterations of abstraction, ones that can be understood as elements of a universal language that would transcend national and cultural frontiers. In the universalist utopia of abstraction, only a radical divorce from figuration, a departure from the human and an attachment to perfect geometric forms, can ensure universality. Abstraction's universalism restates, visually, the classically driven Enlightenment belief in the universality of reason as a perfect, common language capable of eradicating the possibility of error. The figure of the Minotaur goes in a different direction, instating the imperfection of the human body in its materiality (real or imagined, actual or theoretical, multiple and polymorphic) as a universal language. This language is not perfect; in fact, it is always imperfect and unfinished. This is a universalist project that cuts through Western humanism by undoing its classical core and replacing it with a pre-classical one; a newly discovered past not yet fixed in assumptions that equate Greece with standards of human perfection and wholeness. This universalist project maintains the category of the human, but constructs it as a continuous difference — the *Homo universalis* becomes a *Monstrum universale*. It puts forth a non-anthropocentric humanism that aspires to the same universality as that of classical Greece, but by voiding the



idea of a homogenous, exceptional, and superior human being, thus introducing a pre-classical malleability that softens the rigidity of who and what the Greeks were. The project's resistance to stable signification deploys what Étienne Balibar calls an "ambiguous universality" by accepting the fragmented and multiple meanings of universality, and by embracing diverse modalities that seek articulation. Ultimately, the Minotaur rethinks *anthrôpos* as universal ambiguity.

# I.IX. ERŌS

by Giulia Sissa

Love is liquid.

Let us listen to the Greek language. Aphrodite emerges from the Aegean Sea, her body made up of two fluids, the semen of the sky, the water of the sea. Her name resonates with this double nature. In *Aphrodite*, we hear *aphros*, foam. She is the frothy one. She takes shape as a monumental female body. So many statues and paintings capture the epiphany of Venus *anadio-menē*, "emerging" from the waves, or, more allusively, of "bathing Venus," the goddess in the nude, near a vase. Everything about her is yielding, soft and humid. Her material provenance tells us, through the liquid consonant *rho*, that the erotic experience is at odds with hardness, dryness, harm.

Erōs himself is in flux. Again, let the signifiers talk. In Erōs' name you may hear his impetuousness. Erōs is *rhōmē*, "force." But *erōs* is so called because it "flows into" us (*esrhei*). Erōs is *himeros*, "desire." *Himeros* in turn is a *rhous*, the "stream" that most intensely draws the soul. It flows with a rush (*hiemenos rhei*) and eagerly moves us. When a lover contemplates his beloved, suddenly, through his wide-open eyes, particles (*merē*) come to him (*epionta*) in a flood (*rheonta*). *Himeros* is *merē rheonta*: "minute parts in flux." To love

is to be submerged. We are reading Plato here. Socrates is playing with syllables and rhymes, as a poet might. Agathon would say that Erōs is the youngest, and the most delicate (*apalotatos*) of the gods. He is humid (*hygros*): this is why he folds himself about us in every way (*periptussō*), and he secretly insinuates himself into every soul. He cannot be hard (*sklēros*). That is his beauty.

It may also be his insidious, treacherous power. "Erōs, Erōs, the one who drips desire down the eyes, bringing sweet pleasure to the soul of those you make war to . . ." A *stillicidium* of desire infuses the soul. Delight, yes, but also war. And, suddenly: fire, arrows, wounds. Do not come to me, Erōs, with your immeasurable, disordered intensity! You "are out of sync," *arrythmos*! The chorus of Euripides' *Hippolytus* beseeches the god to stay away. His insinuating liquescence is dangerous. Its absorption can be inebriation. Drinking wine is like drenching yourself with erotic emotion. In Anacreon's words, "Lifted high once again from the Leukadian rock into the grey sea I dive drunk with love. . . ." When you drink, your second crater will be for Dionysus and Aphrodite. The two deities share the same point of exquisite equilibrium, before euphoria tilts toward madness.





The erotic experience is neither raw sex nor pretty romance. *Erōs* happens when the body feels pleasure, when desire is signified to the other in the hope that the other's own desire will respond. Love poetry and philosophies of love capture this aesthetic materiality, this dialectic. The embodied presence of the other person, what I perceive of her, of him, rushes into me. That figure, that voice, that smell, the surface of that skin and, above all, those gestures: this is what makes me feel. I feel pleasure, and pain. It all depends on what I decipher. He looks like a god, the man who sits in front of you, talking and smiling. When I gaze at you, my heart pounds, my ears throb, fire creeps under my skin, I am pale, I am speechless, and *drops of sweat are oozing*. Two bodies in resonance, or not.

There are many rich, suggestive images of the erotic event. Fluidity stands apart, however. It is metaphorical, but it also evokes corporeal alterations. In the ancient science focused on the body, women and men become ready for pleasure and desire when their body fluids change at puberty. According to the medical writers of the Hippocratic Corpus, males are equipped with ducts that carry semen to the penis and the testicles. Females have conduits for conveying female semen to the womb. Local secretions

are emitted in the genitals during intercourse, writes Aristotle. Arousal and orgasm involve liquids that move inside and outside of bodies. Erotic preferences depend on how these liquids flow. Semen causes pleasure and desire in whichever area of the body it impregnates. In naturally effeminate men and in boys accustomed to anal penetration, the internal channels heading to the genitals are obliterated; their semen flows toward the anus instead. The anus, however, is unable to eject seminal fluid all at once, as the penis does. As a consequence, these men feel a permanent, unquenchable lust, as do women. The accumulation of semen shapes their sensuality.

Latin poetic philosophy takes up this hydraulic vision of the sexed body. For Lucretius, feeling desire means being struck by an image, a *simulacrum*, which hurts the soul. The collision causes an ejection of seed. *Haec Venus est nobis!* This is Venus for us—nothing more. A drop of sweetness trickles in our heart (*stillavit gutta*), but soon glacial agony takes over. Love is an illusion, as the mirroring surface of a spring reveals to Narcissus. In the most intimate and more physical contact, we remain as avid as a thirsty man immersed in a river, as water flows away from his lips. Lucretius' aquatic metaphors convey the materiality of the erotic experience, but also the

elusiveness of the body, the insatiability of desire, and the impossibility of pleasure. Ovid's masterful *Art of Love* objects to that. A body is a body. It is made up of all the little bits that you caress and kiss, name and flatter. At the right time, we should let run pleasing words on the sweet face, the opulent hair, the slender fingers, and the delicate foot of the beloved: as water gets under the shore, language soaks this imperfect body, polishes its surface, dissolves its rough edges, and embellishes it. "The love which was not true, finally becomes true" (*fiet amor verus, qui modo falsus erat*). The stream of parole makes love.

Love is liquid.

# II



TIME

## II.i. MATTHEW BARNEY

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** Your recent work *River of Fundament* [2014] was inspired by Norman Mailer's *Ancient Evenings*, a sprawling seven-hundred-page novel from 1983 set in pharaonic Egypt. What attracted you to the book?

**MATTHEW BARNEY [MB]** Part of it was that Mailer invited me to meet with him and asked if I had read it. I hadn't, and he said, "You should, because I think you could do something with it." The book initially turned me off, because I really didn't like the way Egyptian mythology is used so directly, and I didn't like the particular brand of eroticism. Although I am attracted to most eroticism, there's a vulgarity in this book, and a kind of frontality in the sexual depictions. Eventually the challenges the book presented were interesting enough for me to use it as a source.

A couple of things opened up the project for me. One was that the mythological narrative is so understood and carried by so many people that it wasn't necessary to articulate it in the same way I would with those of other stories. That meant my project could remain fragmented, which made me more comfortable. Also, there's a material language that runs throughout Mailer's text, which made me think about early Egyptian advancements in the casting arts and in metallurgy, like the creation of different alloys. Suddenly, certain materials that had been taboo for me—for me, as a sculpture maker, the idea of creating a bronze sculpture had not been an option because of the baggage it carries—became available. That was very exciting, and it led to an exploration over several years with different metals, from base metals to alloys and precious metals. That really did come out of the text.

**BH** What was the baggage that bronze carried for you?

**MB** Before *River of Fundament* I had been drawn to materials that could function as building materials, even as architectural materials, but which could also live within the body or be used as external prosthetics. These materials are naturally kind of hybrid, and I tried to use them to make stories and situations that also had a hybrid nature. I wanted to create spaces and objects that had a kind of weightlessness, both in a literal sense and in terms of cultural weight. That is really the opposite of making a bronze sculpture. Through the text I also became more interested in alchemy, and in how energies can be created through the proximity of materials.

**BH** What is the role of the body in alchemy? Like, if you were to put gold leaf



















on the skin, is that itself an alchemical reaction, or is the skin the space where the reaction happens?

- MB** In *River of Fundament* and in *Ancient Evenings*, I think the body is both the landscape and the figure. This was one of the things that really attracted me to Mailer's book—that a description of a river of feces could be understood as both the digestive tract of a dying figure and the river that the deceased must swim across to live again. The surrounding landscape is alive and it's hemorrhaging sulfur; it's dying and generating at the same time. In this project and in other ones, I've wanted the body to be the place and the character, or for a geological condition to take on certain behaviors of the body. I'm interested in treating the body like a kind of empty vessel that another narrative can pass through.
- BH** The idea of the body as a container goes with your thinking about the body as a space for liquids, including liquids that pass through you. I found this great quote where you say, "Zombie films never appealed to me because they were too dry." What did you mean by that?
- MB** I guess I meant that there's a potential for change, that things are still in vitro, still in suspension somehow. A lot of the plastics that have been interesting to me are chemically able to create their own lubrication; Teflon is a good example. The notion that an object can effortlessly pass through a body, and that it can do so by virtue of its chemistry, is really interesting and important. At the same time, live performance has become more engaging to me, and so has thinking about narratives and objects as unrepeatable events. I try to set up different conditions for that as often as possible now, even here in the studio.
- BH** Could you say a little bit more about the entwinement of liquidity as present-tense performance and the sculpture that results from it? We're so conditioned to think about sculpture as a solidification into form. Yet if it's important that the sculpture be more organically related to the event, how do you think the emphasis on real time in the work affects the sculpture that emerges from it?
- MB** Well, in the last five or six years I've made a couple of works that have taken that interest to another level. One was in *River of Fundament*, where we shot a scene in a derelict steel mill using a set of furnaces and a large iron pour. This was done in front of an audience, and it involved an automobile, which, in a way, was the protagonist. It had been saved from the *Cremaster 3*









[2002] narrative, and was repurposed to become a kind of surrogate figure for Osiris, the Egyptian god of the afterlife. The automobile was thrown off a bridge into the Detroit River, dredged out of the Rouge River, taken by the jealous brother Set—who murders Osiris in the original myth—and cut into fourteen pieces. Those pieces were then fed into furnaces, melted along with twenty-five tons of iron, and poured into a reservoir that overflowed into a lower mold of an undercarriage that was of the same make and model as the original automobile. In operative terms this was a kind of resurrection scene, but it was highly complex and physical. To perform it in front of a group of people was very dangerous, particularly since it was raining, which made the molds moist. When you pour molten metal over moisture, the moisture expands and explodes the metal out of the mold. There was a fear that the metal would be thrown into the audience, so they were evacuated and unfortunately weren't able to see the end of the scene.

There was a level of unpredictability that day that was major and exciting, and I think that shooting that scene, along with learning about the history of metallurgy, started to open up a way of working for me that I'm still engaged with now. It also led me to think about how I could introduce water or moisture in an industrial foundry environment, and how to create reactions within the metal casting process. That led to another group of works. I started collaborating with the Walla Walla Foundry in Washington, and we experimented with dumping metal into different fluids. We began with water and moved on to thicker fluids, adding clay, wax, and ice into fluid baths and increasing the scale. Eventually the floor of the casting room at the foundry needed to be excavated. We were then able to dump molten metal into a slurry of mud and water, and the reaction exploded the metal out into the spaces between the clumps of slurry. Each of those pours was like a performance. There was very little I could do to change the form and how the object would eventually look—I ended up opening holes in the mud just before the metal was poured, which created channels and cylindrical shapes in the middle of a chaotic form.

**BH** There's a passage from Okwui Enwezor's essay in the catalogue for *River of Fundament* where he says, "The move to metal casting infused the sculptures with a new kind of sublime power: the brooding and enigmatic works, the almost primitive and obdurate forms, the crude shapes they sprouted, made them appear like prehistoric vessels formed from an ancient periodic table, as

if they had been exhumed from the sediment of an ancient, dried-up riverbed. In contrast to the earlier works, which had the appearance of technologically advanced objects, here were sculptural forms possessing a completely new narrative disposition that hinted at ancient history and myth." Do you agree that there is a kind of prehistoric turn in *River of Fundament*?

**MB** There's an ancient Scandinavian form of casting called bone-coal casting that was mainly used for making swords. At sites where foundries were excavated, human remains were found piled near cupola towers where metal was smelted. It seemed that the bones were being ritualistically placed in the fire to generate energy, and also as a way of stoking the fire with body fats to create more heat. They were making iron, but also, by mistake, they were starting to carbonize iron into steel. Harder, sharper swords were generated that way. The Scandinavians also believed that the bones thrown into the fire had to be chosen specifically. If, for example, the bones of a great warrior were thrown into the fire, the soul of that warrior would be in the blade.

I was definitely interested in imbuing the scene in Detroit with that kind of possibility, which was partly why I wanted to use the chassis of the Chrysler Imperial from *Cremaster 3* in the casting. I think that decision speaks to how I'm interested in placing narratives or histories or even aesthetic modes in proximity or contact, even as each one never stops being itself. That's certainly true of the relationship between *River of Fundament* and the ancient Egyptian narrative. Histories can be dealt with as raw materials that can be placed in proximity to the contemporary or personal, and chemical reactions can take place from there. Real energy can be created by that proximity, or contact.

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** You have long been interested in the archaeological site of Kourion on Cyprus. What interests you about the site? What is your connection to it?

**CHRISTODOULOS PANAYIOTOU [CP]** My primary connection to Kourion is emotional in nature. There used to be a café at the site that had this spectacular view over the cliffs, and it became something of a ritual to go there every Sunday with my family and watch the paragliders. Back then, I was unaware of—or, rather, uninterested in—the antiquities. Then, during my early adolescence, I was educated in ballet, theater, and music at the Kourion Roman theater, which would host the island's most popular festivals. This is what made me want to train as a ballet dancer. As an adult, in an effort to overcome these overwhelming emotions, I became interested in an oblique reading of Kourion, in looking at its stratified horizontal layers with a vertical gaze. Kourion dates back to the Neolithic period, but the most significant excavations conducted there have mostly explored the Roman and Byzantine remains. This process of revealing and hiding is what fascinates me today about archaeology. Where do we choose to stop digging? And how do we deal with what's been revealed and what lies beneath?

**BH** How do you see your work engaging the problem of how different time periods are layered?

**CP** I am sensitive to the politics of digging, and my recent works draw on this. In Cyprus there is an interest in excavating mosaics; in some cases, a mosaic will be revealed, restored, studied, and then put back into the earth as a way of preserving it. What comes to light is indeed subjected to an accelerated death, but isn't hiding also a kind of dying? I am skeptical of the arbitrary conviction that people in the future will share our interest in pasts we have constructed. We clearly do not share the same kind of interest in the past as those who came before us.

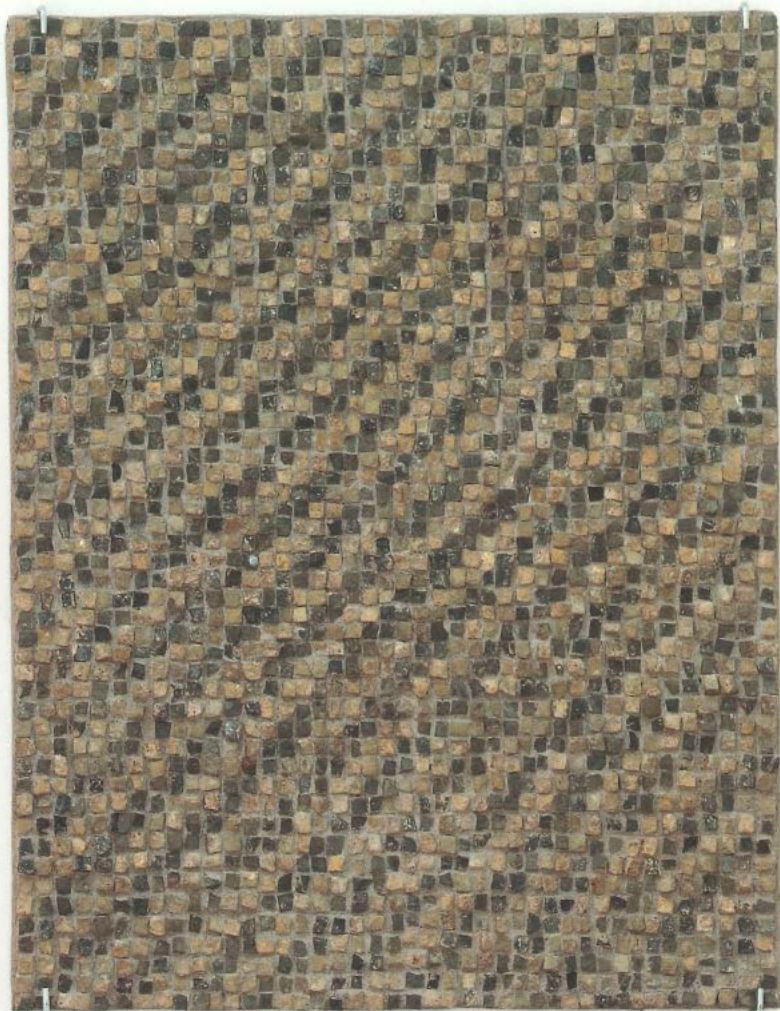
**BH** Is this where your work *Mauvaises Herbes*, which you showed at the Venice Biennale in 2015, comes from?

**CP** Yes. For that, I studied the spontaneous appearance of weeds on the surface of buried mosaics and created mosaic floors with these weeds rendered to scale and the exact same dimensions of the originals under the earth.

**BH** Do you think that archaeologists should not preserve?







- CP Not exactly. Rather, I am interested in how the concept of conservation complicates time. How it annihilates the present by looking into the past and projecting it into the future. Archaeology is in many ways the product of speculative temporalities, and I have a strange feeling, perhaps even a perverse desire, that people in the future will not be as interested in the recovery of physical evidences as archaeology is today.
- BH In a series of works from your show at the Cyprus Pavilion at the Venice Biennale—*Opus Vermiculatum*, *Opus Tessellatum*, and *Fundus*—you activate objects from the museum in a different way, by reusing ancient tesserae from mosaics that cannot be reconstructed. Is there something in particular about the fragment that fascinates you?
- CP Yes, the fragment is generally activated through the desire to be complete, which is often not physically performed or even transposed. This is apparent in the history of sculpture from the Renaissance onward with the establishment of the aesthetics of *non finito*. The ancient tesserae that I used are minor fragments that had totally lost their function and all aesthetic value—they had been detached from their mosaics by natural disasters and through the process of stripping antiquity, or perhaps were even dislodged in ancient times as the floors were swept clean. Most of the mosaics we admire were created as functional floors, and these fragments—conserved today for their scientific rather than their cultural value—once formed a part of them. They will certainly never find their way back to the whole, as traces were lost; nor will they end up in a museum vitrine, as they are considered trivial and interchangeable artifacts. Once the Cyprus Museum's Department of Antiquities gave me the tesserae and the permission to use them, they became raw materials for the three wall pieces you mention, on the agreement that, once the exhibition was over, they would be returned to the museum's restoration department and "de-created"—"restored" back into fragments. This process of de-creation and fragmentation was central to the work, as it allowed me to simultaneously question two major cultural practices of our day: the archaeological tradition and that of the found object.
- BH The fragment always demands a making of the whole. It never lives in a vacuum. In your work, there's a dialectic between deconstruction—say, between the deconstruction of narratives of tradition or heritage—and at the same time, the creation of other narratives that one can invest in. You've worked extensively with narratives that are created out of archaeology for











nationalist purposes. Could you talk about how you see the relationship between archaeology and nationalism?

**CP** Nationalism and archaeology are very strongly connected, at least in my part of the world, as I understand it. Archaeology has always been used as a form of physical proof for the sustenance of nationalist narratives, especially that of national continuity. The terms *tradition* and *heritage* are inventions that seem to have similar impact on the nationalist project.

**BH** Do you think a concept of world heritage is an antidote to that, or would you articulate a different way of thinking about the relationships between archaeology and place and identity?

**CP** I have sympathy for the term *world heritage* because *world* is often used as an alternative to the word *international*. I dislike the term *international*—the recognition of and collaboration of all “nationalisms” into a single cacophonous choir. Having said that, the concept of *world heritage*, a term which was coined and promoted by the United Nations in their efforts for “international” cultural cooperation, doesn’t seem to me to establish a different semantic field. Nationhood remains a constant within this framework of thinking. Now that I think about it, the idea of world heritage is doubly obstructive, because the word *world* stands in conflict with the concept of the local, and *heritage*, like *tradition*, carries the burden of time. I need to think about this more, but it does seem like a vicious nexus.

**BH** This encounter between the local and the translocal is particularly evident in the exhibition that you did in at the Moderna Museet in Stockholm in 2013–14, “Days and Ages.” Could you talk about that?

**CP** I was living in Stockholm when I came across the very fascinating archive of the Swedish Cyprus Expedition, which involved a series of archaeological excavations that took place in Cyprus between 1927 and 1931. Photography was a newly popular medium at the time, and one of the team members was an ardent photographer. He took many photographs that capture not only the activities of the archaeologists but also, in a latent way, the social life of rural Cyprus, which had not previously been documented to such an extent. Back then, I was concluding a very laborious cycle of works based on archival research, so I immediately rejected the idea of producing yet another artwork using archival photography; I felt it would mean the systematization of a single means of production, something I have always feared. So I thought instead of working on a book that engaged in an excavation of the excavation



via the archive. I was very interested in a series of thematic threads that were apparent in the archive, and specifically the highly complex layers of symbolic domination resulting from the hegemonic presence of both the British colonels and the Swedish archaeologists. Even though I spent many days writing about this, the book never happened. When I received an invitation from Moderna Museet to present an exhibition some years later, the archive came back to me through a sculptural work that referred to a single photo taken from the material.

- BH** Thinking about “Days and Ages” makes me reflect on the broader role of displacement and circulation of antiquities in your work—the Elgin Marbles, most famously, but also the Cyrus Cylinder, which is discussed by Mirjam Brusius in the reader to “Two Days after Forever,” your exhibition at the 2015 Venice Biennale. How does your work engage the circulation of objects?
- CP** I see the invention of archaeology as intimately connected to this mode of circulation. I also think that to a large extent what we value so much as archaeology today is intimately connected to the colonial gaze and the colonial project in general. That is probably why I am so fascinated by the exemplary biography of Luigi Palma di Cesnola, the Italian-American diplomat and amateur archaeologist who led excavations in Cyprus before the arrival of the Swedes, and went on to found the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.
- BH** It seems like the dirty secret of many European museums, precisely because they emerge out of the collection of antiquities, is that they’re founded on theft, but you’re suggesting a more complicated way of understanding what’s going on. What’s most important to you in that alternative narrative?
- CP** Well, a specific historical context allowed Elgin to take the Parthenon sculptures, and of course I understand the argument that these elements comprise a unique monument in the process of decolonizing archaeology and “correcting” ruthless acts of imperialism. I wonder, though, if it is not this very act of “theft” that creates the desire, which creates archaeology. Cesnola, in Cyprus, introduced both literal and symbolic value through his violent act of deracinating all those objects. So it was through an act of “theft” that value was organized and generated.

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** Your work is very sensitive to site specificity and to the dynamic conditions of particular landscapes. You are also very nomadic. How do you see the interaction between the particularity of settings and the trans-geographical nature of your practice?

**ADRIÁN VILLAR ROJAS [AVR]** I think my nomadism can be summarized as a journey from an area of extremely low historical density—Rosario, a 150-year-old city in the middle of the Argentine pampa, populated by descendants of early twentieth-century European and Arab immigrants—to areas of high historical density and ethnic juxtaposition. I started with Europe and the United States—that is, in more frozen or stabilized regions—and have gradually immersed myself in places I consider hotter and more vibrant.

This arc has definitely changed my *weltanschauung* and my self-perception. I've gained a far more denaturalized and deconstructed vision of human beings. Until I was at least twenty-five, human differences seemed more abstract than real, as in Argentina we are all quite ethnically mixed together. Moreover, the liberal Eurocentric thought that was handed down from nineteenth-century Argentine elites through public education made all Argentines feel and believe that we are more or less white Europeans, although many of us have Native American or Arab blood. When you leave Argentina you really begin to understand who you are and where you actually come from. And this is shocking, because you realize that Argentina was in its foundational stage a modern biopolitical experiment premised on self-denial with the aim of supporting a white European identity.

**BH** I wonder how this self-conscious engagement with European identity shaped your engagement with Greece as a site. You've worked in Greece before, for the show "A Thousand Doors" at the Gennadius Library in Athens, where you showed your piece *Return the World* [2012], originally shown at Documenta 13. What was the impact of your time in Greece on how you think about the dialogues your work is participating in?

**AVR** The most interesting part of my residency in Greece was discovering that classical antiquity, like Argentine national identity and many other modern national identities, was systematically designed as a Western political project. What Western citizens in both the center and the farthest peripheries internalize from childhood as Greek or classical antiquity—this mythic







world whose visual center is the Parthenon; its heroes Socrates, Plato, and Aristotle; its intellectual legacy Logos and philosophy; and its universal heritage Athenian democracy—is a political design that has been carefully edited by the Greek state, and was driven by the state’s need to integrate into the Western world. In other words, we owe the idea of Greece as the cradle of Western civilization to the modern Greek state. After becoming a nascent modern republic in the wake of its 1832 revolution, Greece designed its own official history. The key discursive operation was to delete all ties with the East, the Ottoman Empire, the Arab world, and Islam. The cross of the Orthodox Christian church on its national flag says it all: the horizon is the West.

But here is the fascinating thing: Greece is crucial to the discursive construction of the West, and that relies on designing ancient Greece itself. Who is the designer? Obviously, the digger. And who are the diggers? Members of the American, French, and German schools, whose respective sovereign political entities designed their own democratic pasts in the nineteenth century. A single fact is enough to make this idea more concrete: the largest and most ambitious archaeological venture conducted in Greece—the lifting of a huge part of the city to discover the Athenian stoa—was funded by Rockefeller.

It is important to mention that before 1832 all proto-archaeology was looting, as seen in famous cases involving English adventurers. Moreover, from the first century to the 1832 revolution, most of what we now call “archaeological material” was plain and simple construction material. It is quite interesting to retrace the stabilization of meanings, concepts, paradigms, and perception schemes in the modern world: before modern museums, most of what we understand to be “the legacy of mankind” was debris, mortar, adobe, bricks, stones—in other words, construction material whose recycling was essential for the survival of human groups in struggle. The Greeks recycled art and architecture. Throughout the long conflict between the Athenians and Persians, thousands of sculptures and temples were destroyed to make bricks, which were then used to build walls of protection to defend against external attacks.

One last piece of anecdotal data to contribute to this discussion on the recycling and uses of construction material: In Greece, archaeologists are an outstandingly strong corporation. They are like the trade union of

skyscraper construction workers in the US. How “deep” to dig has always been a political decision, but today it is crossed with a factor that might have sounded banal back during the early days of modern archaeology. According to what an authorized speaker said to me off the record, archaeological research has clearly reached a limit in technological terms. I was told that “we should stop digging to let future generations continue with new instruments,” but that stopping is not possible simply because “we *must* keep bringing food to the family table.”

**BH** Much of your work unfolds on a monumental or epic scale; at the same time, it is often ephemeral, primed for ruin. How do you see ephemerality functioning in your practice?

**AVR** My practice is essentially suicidal. For the last seven years I’ve been producing hyper-entropic works that have forced me to generate projects at a very high speed. There is no way to replicate them, and 90 percent of what I do is unrecoverable. No retrospective can come out of this, and that’s not an accident but instead a consequence of policies I’ve enacted around my work: I put extreme limits on shipping, tradability, reproducibility, endurance, and preservation in order to systematically undermine what I might call an efficient and pragmatic intervention in the field of art.

Of course, one wants to leave ideas, but ideas are supported by matter. If I do not leave strong traces of my practice, I am foreclosing paths for others to think of me in the future, and this is also suicidal. So my survival as an artist over time is in crisis from the very beginning. This is a political choice. I am deliberately exposing myself to extinction, to a “programmed” disappearance. If we add to this the fact that I am Argentine—that is, an artist from the margins of the planet—I daresay that I am doomed to be forgotten.

Anyway, I’ve understood since I was an art student in Rosario that “contemporary art” should not last forever, but back then I didn’t have the conceptual tools to support that insight. It’s important to emphasize now that none of my projects are designed to survive. There is no natural evolution of my work that can be acquired, only fragile, perishable testimonies. Anybody attempting to preserve these testimonies is constantly negotiating with their hyper-entropic nature. This is not as simple and naive as letting things die or degrade anarchically; in most cases there is a strong follow-up dialogue between the acquiring institution and me and my production team. It’s an open process with no rigid or preset protocol, but one that is carefully developed.



In this sense, a key dimension of my practice is developing relationships with the institutions that support my projects. The long cycle of exchanges that unfold before I execute a project, sometimes lasting for years, is necessary not only to erode institutional fears and prohibitions, but also to allow me to immerse myself in the local universe—the institution itself, the people, the city, the region, and even the country. I try to develop a deep and unique relationship with each context in order to learn exactly what we could do for each other, just as old lovers grasp subtle and implicit wishes beyond explicit demands. I used to say in interviews that “I do not do what the site needs, but what the site deserves.” The monumental scale of several of my projects has been the consequence of these kinds of sustained interactions. They’ve been fed by social, geographical, cultural, and institutional contexts, and even by friendships formed on these trips. The projects become a sort of thermometer for measuring the capabilities, possibilities, resources, ambitions, commitments, and even fantasies of every host-guest relationship.

One such example is *Motherland* [2015], a project I developed for the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York City. *Motherland* includes a script with a set of minimal gestures that must be performed once a year on the building terrace—which cannot be accessed by the public—by a selected member of the museum maintenance staff. This “performance,” so to speak, is hardly noticeable, but it legally must be enacted over and over until the disappearance of the institution itself. The key idea is that this same set of gestures will be repeated every year at the same date, the same time, until the end of the Guggenheim. I cannot imagine the museum disappearing before the White House does, and I can’t imagine the latter disappearing before the world as we know it today does. So, in a sense, isn’t *Motherland* perched at the end of the world? The idea behind the project is that there is not a “done” to be preserved, but a “doing” to be performed endlessly. It is not about letting things die but about flowing with them, sliding along the unscheduled routes that things propose to us, and that we propose to them. It is about accepting nothingness and flowing with time as we face the facts of disappearance and silence.

**BH** What has motivated your choice of materials, particularly clay but also cement and burlap? Do you have an interest in the materials of “traditional” sculpture such as bronze or marble?

**AVR** I think that “Fire” [2004]—my first professional solo exhibition—outlined











the main concerns I've since developed in my practice. To give you an example, for that show I commissioned a friend from the fine arts faculty in Rosario to replicate a painting by Charles R. Knight, the paleontological artist whose illustrations of dinosaurs still "landscape" the walls of the American Museum of Natural History in New York City. In that reproduction, I made my friend add meteorites in a corner of the central scene dominated by a grazing dinosaur; in some way, this addition anticipated the end of the species. Implicit in this project were many of the issues I would continue developing in multiple directions and dimensions over the years: the idea of collaboration, the problem of representing life before and after human beings, the radicalization of time—as in, thinking about the remote past and the end of the world—the addition of representational layers over existing representations in human culture, metalanguage, the problem of disciplines and craft/manual work, and my own role in all this as a scriptwriter, director, and editor.

In 2007, the questions raised in the Knight replica were posed far more consciously in *Pieces of the People We Love*. I won't get into the conceptual background of that project here, but I will summarize the work as the attempt of a teenager to reconstruct all of the cause-effect relationships that might have unfolded since the very beginning of the universe to prompt two young lovers to commit suicide using only homemade materials and tools. This doesn't take place in our present, but in a possible future, and it's made to seem as if the teenager behind it was working on a project in his parents' garage for a high school science fair. That work presented something new that would be central to me from then on: the idea of suicidal materiality. It used raw clay, earth, Styrofoam, glass, a little fish in a tank, cake, as well as lots of other lo-fi stuff. The materiality of *Pieces* was extremely fragile and degradable, and, of course, the work did not survive.

My clay stage began after that, in 2008: I took a single element of *Pieces*, the clay figurines, and expanded them hyperbolically, like a comment in a footnote that grows until it devours the central text. On a personal level, this was a gesture of mourning that began with five kilos of raw clay in a temporary house-studio in Buenos Aires—I had recently moved to the capital and was living far from my family for the first time—and ended with thousands of little figures spilling everywhere. From an artistic perspective, what was initially spontaneous—shaping stuff out of clay—became a

political gesture, as I decided to do everything that was tacitly forbidden in the Argentinean art scene of that moment: working with figuration, crafts, and narrative, the baroque, and sticking to a single material. This is how “What Fire Has Brought Me” [2008] was born; out of a suicidal action in response to hegemonic ones. After 2009, clay and cement became the material basis for constructing a language within a community of collaborators. A five-year period of hibernation, from 2008 to 2013, was necessary to do this. These materials are foundational in my practice: clay is life on earth before humans, while cement is the stage of the Anthropocene, the era in which human beings adapt the planet to make it suitable for their own needs. All of my clay/cement sculptures were no more than blurring traces of disappeared life—my own, my collaborators’, humanity’s. The equation *clay + cement* states, “Before humans, after humans.”

The period that began in 2013 was a great stew of dialogues inside dialogues, dialects inside dialects, detours inside detours. I returned to other materials, but with a much higher level of self-consciousness. The result was the emergence of what I call diachronic objects, which rely on organic and inorganic material—food, garbage, plants, seeds, local objects and materials, industrialized products, and so on. We also began to reuse garbage produced during the process. These diachronic objects “self-model” over time through decomposition and growth, dissolving the idea of a final form. In other words, they cross the border from preservation against time into a kind of autopoiesis—a self-production through time. The key thing here is that I see matter as a register of human and nonhuman activity on earth. Everything you see and touch in my practice is residual, the faint proof of a wide, invisible, and unrecoverable process.

Since 2013, I’ve been working toward generating unprogrammed life inside objects, and withdrawing human agency through an increasingly open and uncertain process. This period has contained an element of self-criticism: the editor’s critique of the scriptwriter. Yet the withdrawal of the self continues in my work. I think of Enrique Vila-Matas wondering, “How will we disappear?”

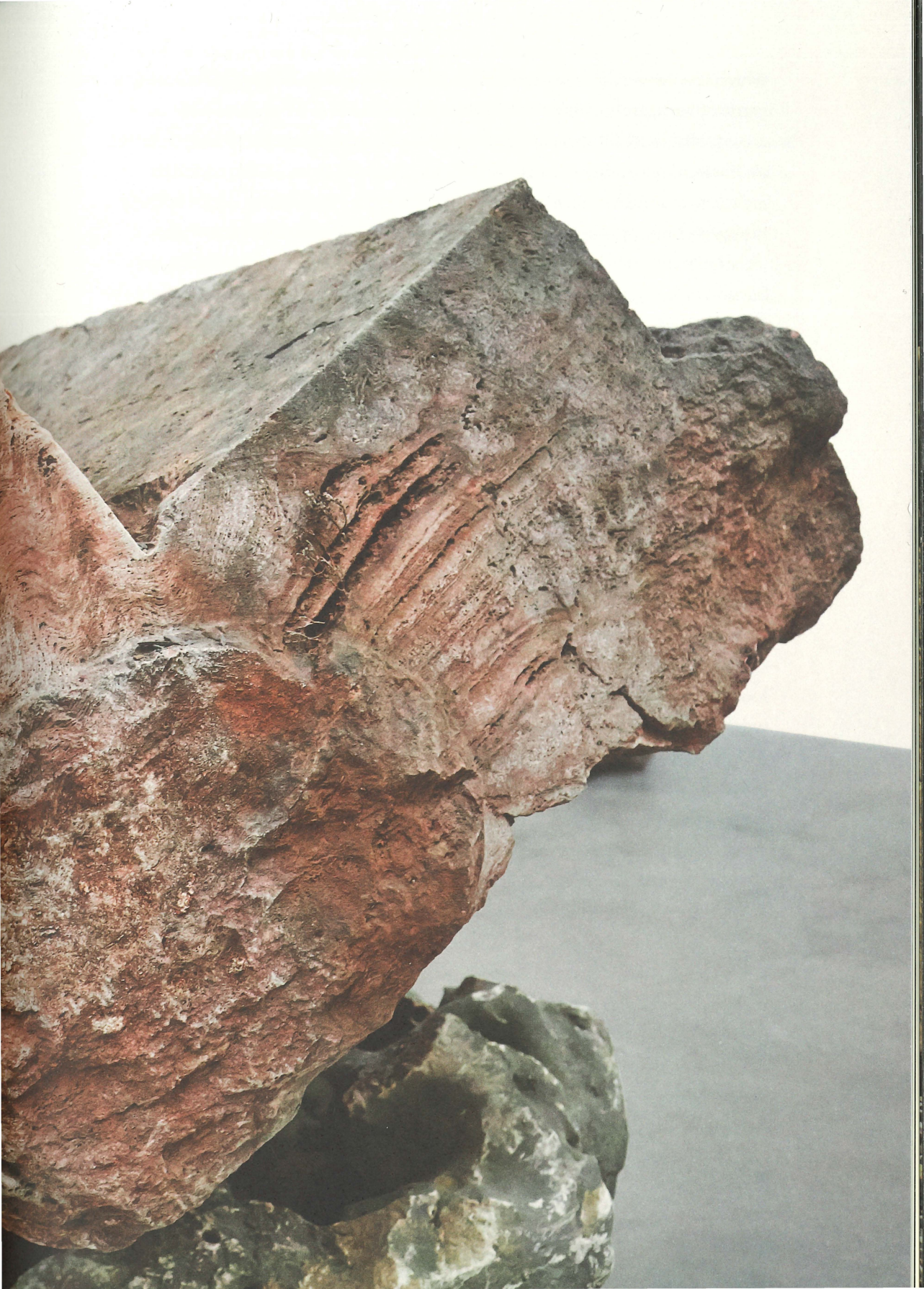
**BH** Why did you choose to recast Michelangelo’s *David* for the “Two Suns” show at Marian Goodman in 2015, especially as a recumbent figure?

**AVR** *David* is the locus of art in that exhibition; he says, “I am art,” in relation to everything that surrounds him, yet he really only generates a background in









which the viewer can see art in its absolute artificiality. "Two Suns"—being a game of backgrounds in which both poles, David and what surrounds him, are equally artificial and set there to "background" the opposite pole—started to dismantle this idea of art as a "project." Rafael Iglesia, an Argentinean architect, talks about removing architecture from architecture, about making things and undertaking projects that do not say, "I am architecture." He illustrates this idea by comparing a chair to a stone: while a chair bears the burden of being a "project" by having a back and four legs, a stone can also be used to sit on. A stone does not exist to be a chair and therefore does not have to be a project, but nevertheless it can share the same utility as one. Iglesia wishes architecture was like that stone.

**BH** Much of your work is located outside the conventional spaces of the museum or gallery. Do you aim to open up alternative spaces for art to inhabit?

**AVR** What if artists stopped thinking about what we do as making art? I think the idea of artmaking is quite constricting. For example, we have this idea that preservation means freezing things, preventing them from living. Why? The Parthenon was once a Roman church and a large storehouse for explosives, and hundreds of Roman and Greek buildings were "recycled" by Christians, then again by Muslims and other Christians. During the Reformation and Counter-Reformation, how many churches had their figures and paintings looted? During the Lutheran and Calvinist reforms, how many works of art were destroyed? And during the French Revolution? The Restoration? The insight that Hubert Robert revealed to us in his visionary paintings is that objects can have a second, third, and fourth life, and that this is nothing to worry about. Renaissance sculpture was built on the idea that Greco-Roman classical sculptures were clean white marble when in fact they were fully painted—it was all quite vulgar, right? Ancient Greece was a shiny stream of color, but today we assume it was always as frozen, as pure white, as we see it now. If this key "mistake" was foundational to Renaissance and modern art, why continue denying complexity, contingency, degradation, time, life, distortion, misunderstanding, wind, rain, sun, human love, and rage in the name of seeing artmaking as a rational laboratory?

One cannot help but feel boredom at the thought of another thousand years of art. We have already done everything and will surely continue to perfect detail after detail. The procedure is always the same: an institution or gallery asks an artist to develop, within a certain time frame, a project that



culminates in a temporary exhibition. This is repeated to infinity. Can we break this pattern? For me, the key variable to attack is time itself. What if I could radicalize it? What if I continued on the path that I started down with the Guggenheim project, *Motherland*? There, I tried to use a minimal gesture to maximum effect. What if I were to try a maximal gesture with minimal effect? A few months ago I acquired my first—and perhaps last—piece of property: a cenote, or swimming hole, in Yucatán, Mexico. It's 538,196 square yards of quiet slowness and naturally purified water. That cenote is a trace of the meteorite collision that enabled our existence, the one that killed the dinosaurs and thus led to the evolution of mammals and human beings. Long before dinosaurs, the primordial soup took three hundred million years to cultivate the first anaerobic prokaryote, the first life-form. That was three hundred million years of quiet, slowness, and warm water. What if we imagined a project whose effects were spread out over two thousand years, so no spectator or curator could check on it? A project that worked as slowly, as quietly, and perhaps even with the same warm water as that primal soup, in order to produce its own microscopic bacteria? Wouldn't that be an elegant final gesture before we start disappearing?



## II.I. GENOS

by Emanuela Bianchi

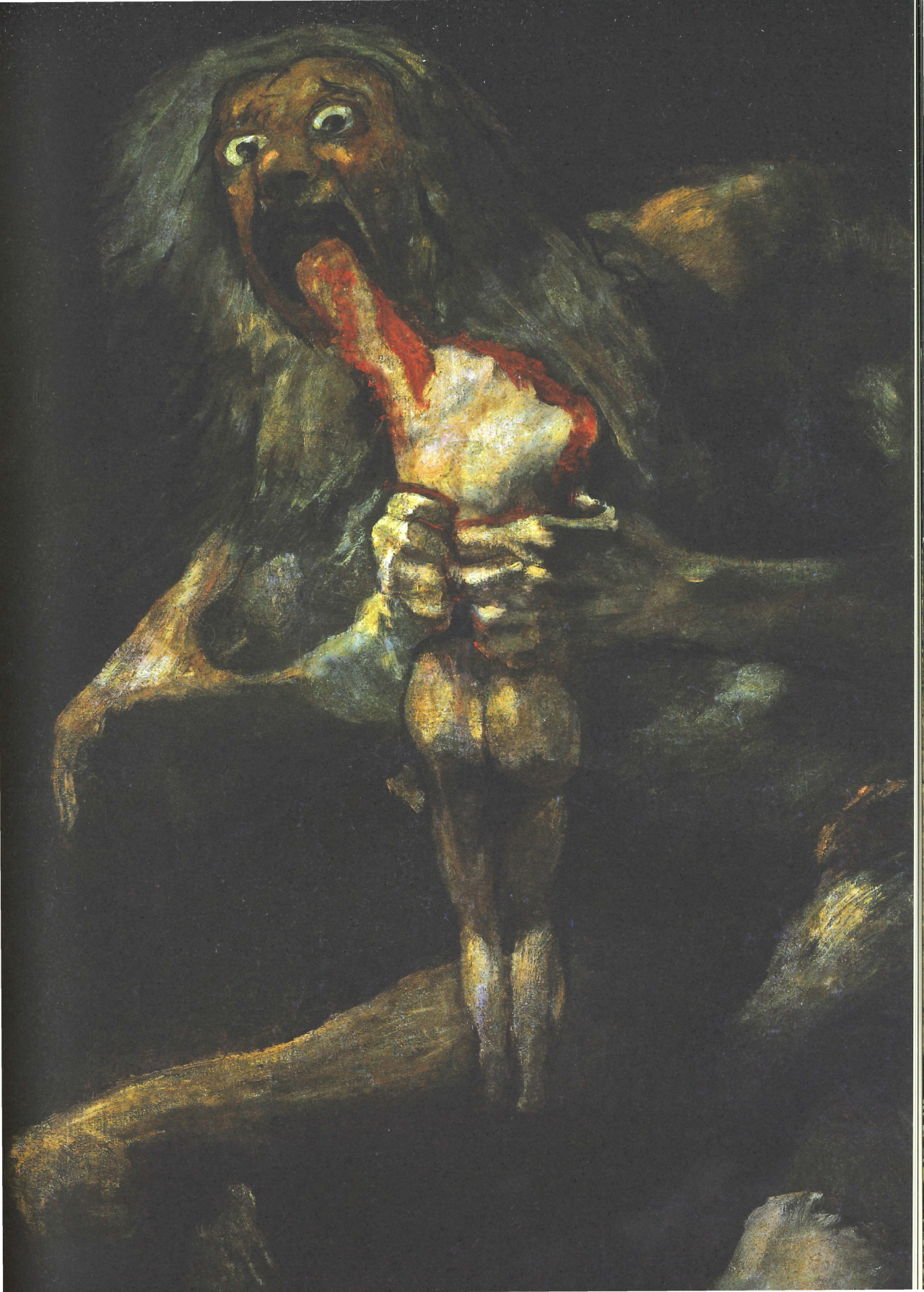
*Genos*: “kind,” and especially the kind of being that comes into existence by nature, by *genesis* rather than *technē*. That which is connected, by nature and by birth, to what comes before and after it—parentage and offspring, kinship, natural relation and natural kind. This *whence* animates our Western interest in Greek antiquity, to the extent that such a genealogy may serve to constitute an increasingly contested “we.” And it is of supreme importance to the Greeks, its decisiveness made searingly acute by its attendant anxieties, contestations, and the almost limitless scope it proffers for misrecognition: the very substance of tragedy. *Genos*, hypostatized, static, denominative: a genre; a gender; a family, tribe, or race; a genus; a typology; a classification; an order. It cannot but betray its precariousness, founded upon nothing but a liquidity, a continual becoming; the flows of blood, of sperm, of milk, of tears; the successions of generations, the earth’s fecundity, surging through time; of mothers—bleeding, birthing, mourning—and fatherhood anchored, oh so delicately, in the intransigent solidity of words and names, both desired and denied.

The earliest appearance of *genos* comes in Book Two of the *Iliad*. We learn of the vast range of allies on the Trojan

plain, speaking a thousand different tongues. We discover the names of the warriors, their forefathers, provenances mortal and divine. These litanies give us their dwelling places, their agricultural and geological riches, the mountains that shelter them, the animals that bore them to Troy, the waters that quench them, the rivers that carve out and replenish their landscapes, and the fauna they share life with, to wit:

Pylaemenes led his shaggy-breasted  
Paphlagonians  
out of the land of the Eneti, from which  
are the breed [*genos*] of wild mules:  
the men who held Cytorus and dwelt  
about Sesamus,  
building their splendid halls along the  
Parthenius River.

These heroic genealogies find their divine counterpart in Hesiod’s *Theogony*, where we see the genealogy of the gods, the “holy race [*genos*] of immortals who always are.” Already, the contradiction that will yield the birth of metaphysics—that between Becoming (*gignomai*) and Being (*einai*)—shines forth, for how can eternal things have lineage and origin? Plato himself will reject this Hesiodic ancestry, and install Socrates as the midwife of philosophical insight.





Plato, like Oedipus, Zeus, and Cronos before him, at once defies and exemplifies masculine *genos*. Cronos hates his father, Ouranus, and castrates him with a jagged sickle. The son defies the father, mutilates him, and substitutes himself in his place, generically, at the level of *genos*. But he cannot stop the generative flow of the dismembered organs: "the bloody drops that gushed forth Earth received." Thus are born the Furies, nymphs, and giants—those monstrous and feminine banes, lures, and enemies of Olympians and heroes. As the severed members fall to the sea, there emerges from the foam Aphrodite, destined to cause havoc by promising Helen to Paris, her beauty exceeding all proprieties of marriage and kinship. The *Theogony* describes a generating, fecund, parthenogenetic, self-sufficient earth, and yet this feminine power is accompanied by deceit, cunning, and evil, and must be taken, subdued, appropriated, mastered (as was Pandora), incorporated (as Zeus swallows Mētis), or seeded from without. The drama that ensues animates the whole of Greek life. One of its names is the *Oresteia*, Aeschylus' great tragic trilogy.

The pollutions of blood and the deformations of *genos* are at the heart of tragic destiny, setting *genos* against *genos*, maternal blood against paternal name. In the trilogy, *genos* at first signifies the House of Atreus. Atreus

feeds his brother his own children: offspring as nourishment, unthinkable circuitry. Aegisthus, the surviving son, knows that the meal was fatal to his *genos*; his line is cursed. The chorus may well appeal: "Who can cast out from the house its accursed brood [*gonan*]? The *genos* is bound for ruin!" Cassandra, however, senses another order to come, a counter-*genos*, that of the kindred (*syngonon*) Furies, gorged on human blood. Orestes, in *The Libation Bearers*, claims (ironically?) that they are "brought to pass from the blood of the fathers. For the dark weapon of lower powers, from the kindred [*genei*] fallen, crying for vengeance, and raging madness, and empty terrors of the night, incite and torment a man. . . ." Their excessive, dangerous, feminine, fluid *genos* is made clear in the cycle's final play.

This play, *Eumenides*, begins with the Pythia's genealogy of prophets: Gaia, Themis, and Phoebe, who gives the Oracle to Phoebus Apollo as a birthday gift (*genethlios*). Apollo, however, belongs to another, masculine order. He is the spokesman for Zeus, his father, and he travels to Delphi escorted by the children of Hephaistos, father of the autochthonous Athenians, road builders who "tamed the untamed land." The Furies are, by contrast, black, foul breathed, "dripping from their eyes a hateful drip." The Pythia says, "I have not seen the tribe that produced this company, nor the land that reared this *genos* with impunity."



At the final trial of Orestes, Athena inquires into the parties' *genos*, observing that the Furies "are like no *genos* of creature ever sown." They respond, "We are eternal children of Night, we are called Curses in our households under the earth." *Genos* as threat to *genos*, as anti-*genos* (see also *Antigone*). Orestes, naturally, is an Argive, son of Agamemnon. The paternal genealogy is plain as day. At the play's close, Athena admonishes the Furies, now subdued and Kindly, not to "let loose the drops whose untamed spirit will devour the seed."

Opposed to *genos* as a stable, paternal category—one that lives on in philosophy—is the excessive, fluid, mobile *genos* that flows through the blood, through a landscape's rivers, as nourishment from a mother's breast, so easily refused both by Hector and deadly Orestes. Through it, too, flow certain unquenchable demands. A final glance at Euripides' *Phoenician Women*: Tiresias' terrible prophecy tells Creon he must sacrifice his son for success in war. He must pour out his blood in the chamber where Dirce, the earth-born dragon, watched over the sacred spring. He thereby may appease Ares' ancient wrath, he who seeks vengeance against Cadmus for his murder of Dirce. "And if the land receives fruit for fruit, mortal blood for blood, Gaia will be well-disposed to you. . . ."

## II. II. NEUTRALITY

by Constanze Güthenke

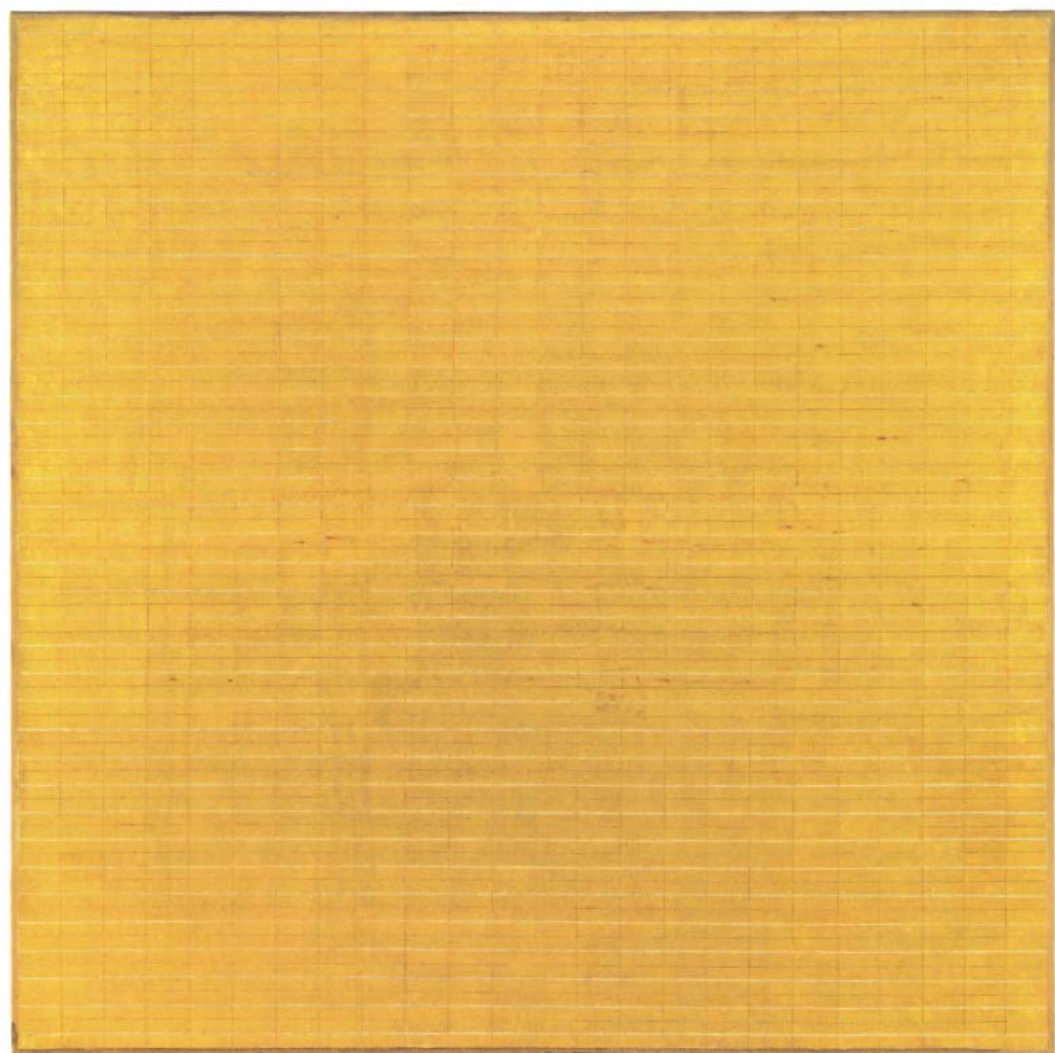
The closing paragraph of Johann Winckelmann's *History of Ancient Art* from 1764 likens the modern historian to a lover deserted on a beach, looking out across the waves to the ship of her departing beloved:

Just as a woman in love, standing on the shore of the ocean, seeking out with tear-filled eyes her departing lover whom she has no hope of ever seeing again, thinks she can glimpse in the distant sail the image of her beloved; we, like the woman in love, have remaining to us, so to speak, only the shadowy outline of our desires: but this makes the desire for the objects we have lost ever more ardent, and we examine the copies of the original masterpieces with greater attention than we would have done were we to be in full possession of them.

With her inner eye, the one who stays behind draws the contours of her lover's face and figure; an act made possible and necessary only by the liquid body of water that separates them. In Winckelmann's writing we see him searching for the contour, the defining outline, the blueprint for classical sculptural bodies. This echoes

the crispness and minimalism of the outline drawings of John Flaxman and Wilhelm Tischbein, sketched not long after, which illustrate the possibilities and conditions of encounter in Homer's *Iliad* and *Odyssey*. But what if we look more closely at the ocean, that moving mass that sets ancient and modern in relation to each other, and creates the classical in the first place? Water does not only separate. It may not always link, but its motion interrupts clear distinctions between here and there, surface and depth, in favor of a fluid focus. With Winckelmann's paragraph in mind, we may ask if there can be "attention" without desire, even ardent desire for "objects we have lost." Can coolness, serenity, be found in the shimmering of waves, and can that draw us away from the nostalgia of lost possession?

In a lecture course on "the Neutral," its book version a collation of notes and note cards, Roland Barthes approaches the Neutral in the guise of twenty-three "figures," from "benevolence," "weariness," and "silence" to "adjectives," "anger," "answer," "retreat," and "arrogance." All contain an element or trace of the Neutral, which Barthes describes as a shimmering, a fluctuation or "twinkling" [*scintillations*]. Like the alternating silhouette of a rabbit or a face





in a rebus drawing (such as the lovely German *Kippfigur*), those traces respond to an oscillation; this response is the stance of the Neutral. It is not a stance of weakness, passivity, or indecision, but of protestation. The Neutral is active, emphatic, vivid, and in its lack of absoluteness it “baffles” and “outwits the paradigm,” interrupting the need to choose one thing over another. It overturns binaries and certainties, instead recognizing a “loving entanglement,” the imperative not to simplify, but to accept “both/and” over “neither/nor.” Such neutrality works in a minor key, though one that is patient and openly willing to see the subtle contours of grisaille where others, looking at a painting or the ocean, see undifferentiated gray. This is not indifference but a form of suspension, and it can be manifested in lassitude as much as in ardent, intense, unprecedented states, depending on which contour we see at a given moment: rabbit or hunter, vase or face.

Above all, this is not distance as lack or distance as a prompt to overcome. It is the creation of space as a means of attentive engagement. If we think of the relation between the classical and the here and now, it is not unlike the space in which the “stranger,” as sociologist Georg Simmel described him a little more than a century ago, makes a habitat. The distance that marks a stranger who has stopped wandering but maintains

the potential to move again is one of meaningfulness, indicating not passivity or lack of participation but representative of a “particular formation made from farness and closeness, *Gleichgültigkeit* [a noun whose meanings range from indifference and coolness to disinterestedness to giving everything equal value] and engagement.” Wary of overinvesting in structures of desire to capture the workings of classicism, and likewise wary of celebrating the auratic, epiphanic encounter as a mode of classical and postclassical reading and understanding, I confess instead to longing for the cool (not the cold) and limpid; for the oscillating waves that join and separate without signaling retreat or denial. Neutrality, like the skepticism of Pyrrho, who emerges as Barthes’ lodestar, may be able to sustain that simultaneous movement of far and near, their overlapping contours. Neutrality is as kind as the smile Barthes prefers over violent laughter. Neutrality takes us out to sea, away from the figure on the shore, to a more impersonal space and moment.

Of inspiration, that energetic recognition in and of a moment in time, the painter Agnes Martin writes:

It exists in the mind  
 Before it is represented on paper it  
 exists in the mind  
 The point—it doesn’t exist in the

world

The classic is cool

A classical period

It is cool because it is impersonal

The detached and impersonal

If a person goes walking in the moun-  
tains that is not detached

And impersonal, he is just looking back.

## II.III. FOSSIL

by Maria Stavrinaki

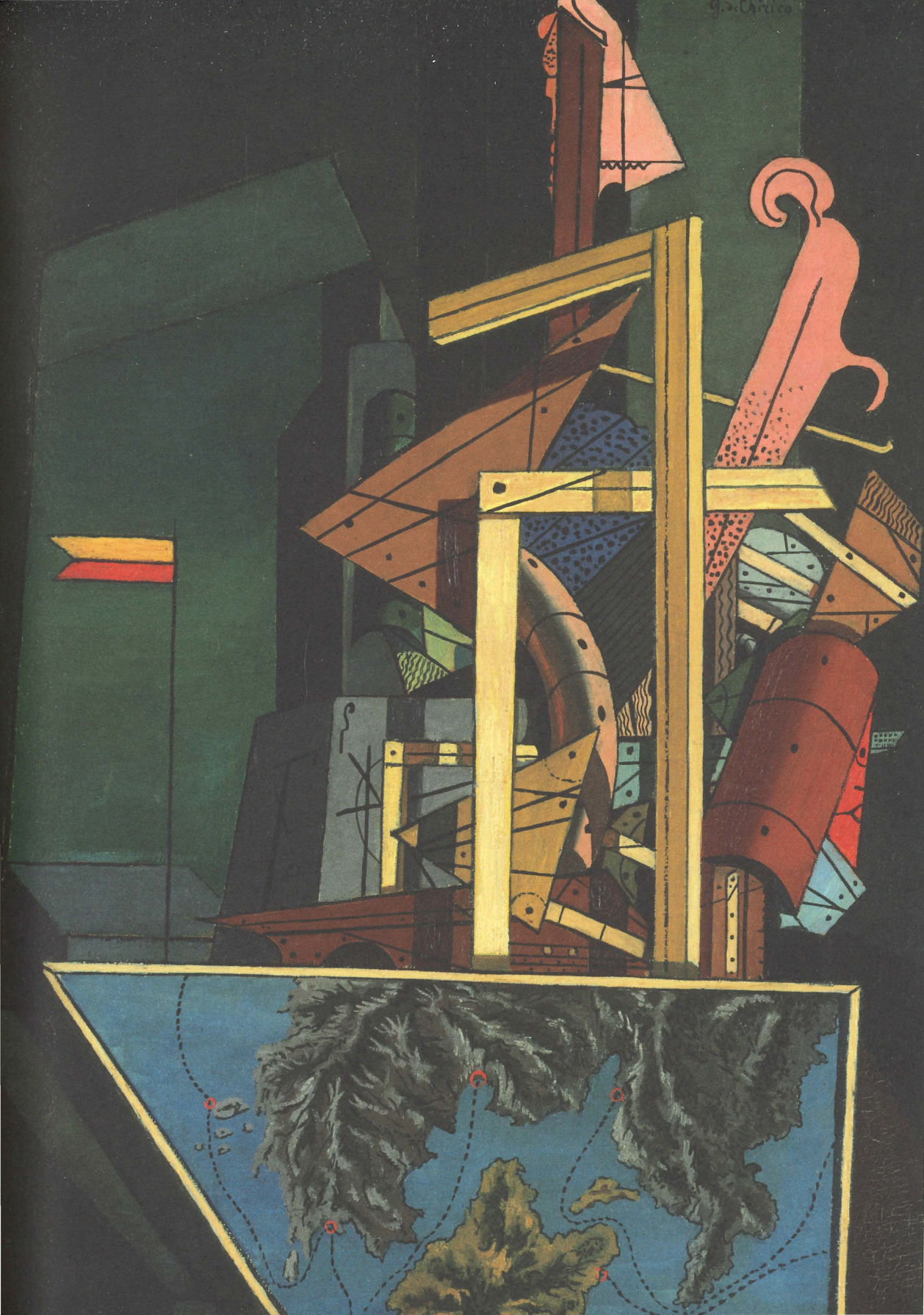
Among the innumerable fantasies to which modernity has given birth since the end of the eighteenth century as challenges to the classical era, none can vie with the force of the fossil. The latter is at once a material formation and a temporal index. As an index of time, the fossil ignores the human entirely while testifying to its own finitude. As a material formation, it combines the minerality of stone with the formal fluidity of the living. Indeed, before the eighteenth century, which marked the onset of the historicization of nature and its annexation by human memory, fossils were perceived as free expressions of a ludic nature. From that point on, however, they were interpreted as rare survivors of the abyss of time, per the metaphor forged by the French naturalist Comte Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon to denote geology's terrible expanse across time. In his writing, Buffon hastened to shorten this expanse in order to make it more compatible with the capacities of human comprehension. As the scale of historical time broke down over the course of the nineteenth century, it washed away not only established canons and modes of periodization, but also the human species itself. With the discovery of the "fossil man" in the sediment of

Abbeville, France, in 1859, and Charles Lyell's and Charles Darwin's recognition of an evolution that was so slow as to be imperceptible, the ontological precarity of the human species became legible in light of a multitude of extinct species.

More antique than the antique, arising out of an era ignorant not only of classical texts but also of the artifacts of protohistory and, almost always, those of prehistory as well, the fossil was at once eminently modern. It was modern because it was a fragment, a particle of a vanished truth to be reinvented again and again by later narratives. It was modern, too, because it was the expression of a critical historical consciousness. More importantly, this witness to the *longue durée* became the other side of technological acceleration—the incredible force produced by the fossilization of artifacts and the world itself (evidenced, for instance, by the exploitation of fossil fuels).

It is precisely the oxymoronic duplicity between the expanse of prehistory and the acceleration of time that many modern artists have seized on from the time of World War I until now, the era of the Anthropocene. For a long time, prehistoric art was of no use to artists seeking to overcome classical norms: Édouard Lartet and Henry Christy,





the inventors of Paleolithic *art mobilier*, interpreted prehistoric art as a form of realism capable of countering the calm and confident evolutionary outlook within art history, thus embracing the same atemporal artistic ideal emblemized by the sculptures of Parthenon. Instead of finding their inspiration in art, then, numerous artists found it in the fossil: the silence of the fossil matched modernist formalism, its minerality resonated with mechanization, and the automatic nature of its formation complemented artists' quest for impersonality. Above all, charged as they were with a temporality at once primitive and belated, fossils were also capable of supporting the historicity of the present—a present that found itself situated at the juncture of post-history and prehistory, between the world coming to an end and another one just beginning.

The fossil emerged from a linear narrative of evolutionary thought. Yet it became, for many artists and thinkers, a metaphor for the repetition of origin, for the *corso* and *ricorso* of history. Ironically, the world of Giorgio de Chirico, saturated with classical references, drew its intelligibility from a prehistoric analogy. De Chirico often described the modern world as "Earth before the Deluge," whose natural formations had simply been replaced by those of man. In his paintings,

references to classical antiquity and its resurgence during the Renaissance are defamiliarized through several formal devices, including through the integration of signs of contemporaneity. The familiar historical world is made opaque, waiting to be deciphered anew. At the end of 1920s, Alberto Savinio literalized this metaphysical post-history by juxtaposing classical ruins and dinosaurs in the midst of luxuriant forests. In the same period, György Lukács, followed by Walter Benjamin and Theodor Adorno, enlisted the notion of "second nature," which was "not dumb, sensuous and yet senseless like the first; it is a complex of senses—meanings—which has become rigid and strange, and which no longer awakens interiority." This definition echoed with Karl Marx, for whom, in capitalism, "time is everything, man is nothing; he is, at the most, time's carcass." Far from a materialist conception of history, *pittura metafisica* questioned the fossilization of the classical itself, whose primacy was not only worn out but rendered nonsensical in a world of eternal return. Even so, the fossil was not only a melancholic and ironic allegorical device. Jean Dubuffet declared himself an "actualist." Considering that "there is no precedent, [that] every man who comes into the world" is "the first," he violently contested humanist exceptionality. His geological landscapes at the



beginning of the 1950s had a horizontality and thickness penetrated with potential fossils: in recognizing this, each spectator became a "first man," conferring onto fossils a new actuality.

Rare indeed are the symbolic inventions that have succeeded in liquefying reified forms of history, including those of the classical, with a force equal to that of prehistory. Having ceased mourning an antiquity forever lost, Paul Klee suddenly discovered in the wake of World War I a veritable form of release in historical contingency: geology and paleontology, he thought, taught the contemporary artist that what is *now* and *here* could also be *different*. It is true that vehement attacks on the classical have long since ceased. The classical seems more ready than ever to take part in the play of historical contingency, not because it must submit to another depreciation but because it is time for it to become equal to, albeit different from, other human fictions.



## II.IV. DEBT

*by Yannis Hamilakis*

Gentlemen . . . it is to those stones that we owe to a large extent our political renaissance.—Iakovakis Rizos-Neroulos, 1838

. . . the ancestors of the most powerful tribes must have grown to an immense stature. . . . [I]nevitably the ancestor himself is finally transfigured into a god. . . . The awareness of having debts to gods did not, as history teaches, come to an end even after the decline of “communities” organized on the principle of blood relationship; just as man inherited the concepts of “good and bad” . . . he also inherited, along with the divinities of tribes and clans, the burden of unpaid debts and the longing for them to be settled.—Friedrich Nietzsche, 1887

. . . the debt becomes a debt of existence, a debt of existence of the subjects themselves—Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 1983

We owe ourselves to death.—Jacques Derrida, 1996

Nothing but stones. Anything but. Sacred relics, and more. Stones as persons, as holy, not the feats of the ancestors but the ancestors themselves. Stones-ancestors as creditors. Caryatids that could be heard mourning, imprisoned in gray rooms under cloudy skies, “as a gliding fog hides the Empires: London, Rome, Greece.” Nostalgic for the light, sisters in exile. Bodily fragments, longing for the whole. Fractal persons, always there, always in the

background, as well as the foreground. Sometimes even inlaid onto our own bodies. There, here, everywhere, to remind of the debt owed to them. Stones as godly persons, ancestors as gods, to whom an eternal debt is owed. Ruins of debt, debt ruins.

And amongst them, a disturbance of memory on the Acropolis: an ancient architectural fragment from the temple of the Erechtheion with an Ottoman inscription in Arabic script, chiseled







upon the flesh of the marble in 1805. It praises the Ottoman governor of Athens and his feats in fortifying the "Holy Rock." You can read it with your hands. Duration matters. Mineral memories, nested temporalities; temporalities of geology, along with the temporality of the classical, the temporality of the Ottoman life of the Acropolis, and the temporality of its various presents. Time as coexistence, not succession. A tactile, sensorial, marmoreal, liquid memory, evoking multiplicity. The Acropolis speaks Arabic too. It can even communicate with the migrants from the Middle East.

But can the debt to it be repaid? Can an infinite, ancestral debt, a debt of existence, a debt upon which the national body owes its existence, be repaid? A debt that also operates, more often than not, as a debt/guilt? As a mirror upon which the contemporary descendants stare at daily, and are found short? A shattered mirror that obscures more than it reveals, a cryptic mirror, fit for the crypto-colony of the nineteenth century, and more so for the debt colony of the twenty-first century?

The Acropolis, the Parthenon, Vergina, Philip and Alexander. The pastiche of national iconography, the juxtaposition of disparate temporalities, or better, a facade for the contemporary marketplace. Not all ancestors are the same, however; the debt is not owed to them equally.

Not all of them have conquered the world, civilized the ecumene, and amassed the loot of the Orient. Not all ancestors have become gods; but even if they have, some are greater gods than others. It is time for them to be resurrected. A second coming is long overdue. It is time for them to come to the rescue of their descendants, at their darkest hour, at their time of need. Disturbing the burials of the ancestors, revisiting the dead, journeying into the underworld to meet them, is the national reenactment of choice. The mound at Amphipolis, in northern Greece, marks the spot. A mound full of treasures. A mound full of hopes. A mound excavated, it seems, by the whole country. Layer after layer, statue after unearthed statue. An effort that cites constantly the other archaeological journey to the underworld, the 1977 excavation at Vergina by Manolis Andronikos, the archaeologist-shaman of the nation. Philip and Alexander, father and son, Vergina and Amphipolis. And the ceaseless and, it seems, futile search for the body of the great ancestor, the holy relics to be venerated. To the economy of financial markers, a moral economy of hope, an occult economy, an oneiric archaeology. A dreaming nation, amidst the crisis. A hallucinating national body, reveling in visions of gold and global fame. An archaeological soteriology, an archaeo-economy of salvation. An economy of ancestors—of semi-gods



who will resurface and, in doing so, will prove the moral superiority of the land, and even repay the debt to the markets. Alas, the eternal, primordial debt owed to them by their descendants, the debt/guilt, will be perpetuated. Some debts can never be repaid.

It is not through an act of repayment but through a political act, a refusal, that we will break the relation of domination of debt.—Maurizio Lazzarato, 2015

## II.V. TRANSMISSION

*by Jaś Elsner*

If we are to be self-aware about our reception of the ancient world, we must attend to the means by which it has been transmitted. The reception histories of surviving ancient texts are very different from those of objects. Our grasp of antiquity relies on combining textual and material evidence. If, however, we conflate the different kinds of evidence available to us, we risk compressing history into archetypal mush.

Greek and Latin texts—not only masterpieces but also “useful” works such as the medical writings of Galen or the mathematics of Euclid—were already selected within antiquity. In late antiquity, texts on papyrus rolls were laboriously transcribed onto expensive vellum codices, creating an elite canon of the past that was retranscribed in monastic scriptoria throughout the Middle Ages until the era of the printed book. The surviving texts represent a conscious selection process that began in ancient Greece and Rome. This is an extraordinary story, and we can easily underestimate how these texts were selected on the basis of cultural choices, and in response to the demands and needs of earlier eras, which had their own tendentious forms of classicism.

Ancient objects have a profoundly different history of reception. What

survive today are precisely *not* the specially selected masterpieces of ancient art that packed the forums, temples, and museums of the Roman Empire’s capitals. These objects, almost without exception, were destroyed over the course of the Middle Ages. There remain a few rare statues mentioned by ancient sources—for example, the Winged Victory of Paionios (ca. 420 BCE) from Olympia, mentioned by the traveler Pausanias in the second century CE. But apart from those cases, the overwhelming majority of the objects around which we tell the story of classical art are happenstance archaeological discoveries, a bricolage of flotsam and jetsam. No one selected them until collectors and museums began buying them. What remains is that which happened to fall but was not destroyed, that which was buried or not thrown in the limekiln. This material exists in extraordinary quantities—much of it of remarkable quality—yet none of it was especially valued by the ancients themselves. The exceptions are the artifacts that were always considered precious and remained in imperial and ecclesiastical treasuries from antiquity onward: the prime gems, such as cameos; the remarkable objects (beakers, platters)







made of semiprecious stones or rock crystal; and, in late antiquity, the ivories carved for the emperor and his court.

What I want to emphasize here is the fundamental and fascinating fissure between how we possess and know our ancient material culture, on the one hand, and our ancient literature on the other. The histories of classical reception have largely sought to paper over this rupture in order to make coherent narratives of the past. But in doing so they have suppressed the history of how we know what we know. The immense desire for a coherent past against which to measure, compare, and differentiate our present blinds us to the incommensurability of the different evidential bases on which we build our picture.

To ground these reflections concretely, let us turn to the most significant period in the transmission of the Roman past—that of the Franco-Germanic Carolingian era, which took place over the eighth and ninth centuries CE. Imperially supported monasteries spawned a golden age of book production, scholarship, and learning focused on both Christian materials and pagan classics. Most of what we now have of Latin literature was copied during that era from late antique manuscripts.

Let's take two archaeological finds that were regarded as the ultimate prestige pieces within the Carolingian court: Roman sarcophagi that

were repurposed for the bodies of Charlemagne and his successor, Louis the Pious. Both caskets were in excellent condition when they were reused to bury Charlemagne and Louis, although their original ancient lids had been lost. Both are frieze relief sarcophagi, each featuring a single dramatic subject across its entire side face. Despite surface similarities, though, the caskets are radically different in their origins and referents.

Charlemagne was interred in a third-century CE pagan casket showing the rape of Persephone, while his son was buried in a fourth-century CE Christian sarcophagus that shows Pharaoh's armies drowning in the Red Sea as the Israelites walk to safety. It is not clear what the ninth-century Franks made of these themes; neither object remains in situ today. During the height of Carolingian pomp, these objects were chance finds selected for special use and elevated to imperial grandeur. Neither was necessarily important at the time of its production, but both were considered exceptional masterpieces at the time of reuse.

In contrast to how archaeological finds were haphazardly reappropriated as prestige objects, late antique codices were carefully copied. We have, for example, two ninth-century Carolingian manuscripts of the Latin translations of the *Phaenomena* by the Greek poet

Aratus (ca. 315–240 BCE). The “Leyden *Aratea*,” with its thirty-five surviving miniatures of constellation figures, contains not only the first-century CE translation made by Germanicus, the father of the emperor Caligula, but also portions of Avienus’ fourth-century version of Aratus’ text. The volume is a lavish copy of what was already a lavish work of scholarship in late antiquity, probably made in the 840s. The “London *Aratea*” contains Cicero’s first-century BCE version with twenty-two full-page images of the constellations mainly drawn in brown and red ink and often with explanatory text written within the shapes. It too was made in northern France in the ninth century, and its texts were drawn from a rich tradition of astronomical commentary that probably reflects original scholarship in the Carolingian period. These two examples demonstrate the transmission of different textual, visual, and commentarial traditions through a significant scientific text. There has been no rupture of reception—as there has been with the sarcophagi—in the *Aratea* as it has moved from the Greek original via various Latin translations, from roll to codex, and from late antique model to Carolingian deluxe copies.

These examples, all from the same cultural moment, are distinct artifactual responses to antiquity—forms of classicism and appropriation. Each differs

in the extent to which its transmission into the Carolingian era was marked by continuity or rupture, and the extent to which that was respectfully antiquarian or radically transformative of the past. If Charlemagne’s sarcophagus had been read as a Christian allegory in the ninth century, that would have been a significant distortion of its ancient resonances; if it were recognized as a pagan subject, that would have been a scandalous burial choice for the first Holy Roman emperor. There are no neutral options in the history of classical transmission.

## II.VI. MĒTIS

by Yorgos Tzirtzilakis

Every revision of antiquity is always archaeological, or, if you will, constitutes a reverse archaeology of the present from which we repose the question of origin (*archē*). So what do we wish to learn from antiquity, to “liquidate” from it, today? Ultimately, what we measure ourselves against is “an archaeology that does not . . . regress to a historical past, but returns to that part within the present that we are absolutely incapable of living. What remains un-lived therefore is incessantly sucked back toward the origin, without ever being able to reach it. The present is nothing other than this un-lived element in everything that is lived.”

What, then, is that aspect of antiquity that is at once immanent but difficult to experience, that which has been repressed more than anything else by Western thought? I shall start with its name: *mētis*. It is a difficult word and a strange concept rarely in use today, although a single-word definition—*polytropos*—occurs in the opening verse of *Odyssey*: “Tell me O muse, of that ingenious hero.” Ulysses is the *polymētis*—the hero par excellence.

The whole terrain of *mētis* has been charted by the Hellenists Marcel Detienne and Jean-Pierre Vernant, in a rigorously academic yet fascinating

way. Describing *Mētis* in the form of a goddess, they present the following taxonomy to highlight her mythological origins and the breadth of her cunning intelligence:

The forms of knowledge of Athena and Hephaestus, of Hermes and Aphrodite, of Zeus and Prometheus, a hunting trap, a fishing net, the skills of a basket-maker, of a weaver, of a carpenter, the mastery of a navigator, the flair of a politician, the experienced eye of a doctor, the tricks of a crafty character such as Odysseus, the back-tracking of a fox and the polymorphism of an octopus, the solving of enigmas and riddles and the beguiling rhetorical illusionism of the sophists.

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So who is *Mētis*, this strange and overlooked goddess who devises a thousand tricks and combines the wisdom of Athena with the cunning of the fox? In Greek mythology, she is the first wife of Zeus, who swallows her to assimilate her powers; she is the mother of “owl-eyed” Athena and Poros. She personifies the ability to find a passage, and, in Plato, she is the





ancestor of Erōs. *Mētis* combines flair, wisdom, forethought, subtlety of mind, deception, duplicity, resourcefulness, reversal, inversion, opportunism, trickery, and even deceit, skills acquired through patience and applied to situations that are shifting, disconcerting, and ambiguous. As you will realize, *mētis* names a tradition of thought that mimics certain ways in which nature adapts itself to an unstable world full of change and violent conflict.

But what happened to this form of archaic thought and practice? Detienne and Vernant place the crucial turning point at the end of the fifth century BCE when *Mētis* disappears, as if forever banished to Zeus' stomach. That was when the cunning of *mētis* gave way to notions of Plato's good (*agathon*), of form (*eidos*), of truth, and of prudence (*phronēsis*)—concepts that have fascinated Western modernity. In *Laws*, Plato condemns the practice of fishing with hooks and nets: such methods reflect the machination, the duplicity, and the scheming intelligence of the man of *mētis*, who is immersed in the world of phenomena and threatens to evade philosophical wisdom and the rules of the ideal city.

For the same reason, Aristotle in his *Rhetoric* rages against the sophist Corax, who distorts the order of truth by turning the weaker argument into a stronger one.

All this leaves us wondering: What is this antiquity represented by *mētis*? What is its relation to what Poe called the "glory that was Greece / And the grandeur that was Rome"? Unlike the classical, defined by symmetry and harmony, *mētis* is delinquent and retrogressive—capable of going forward or backward or even moving spirally if necessary. In short, it is a series of techniques and stratagems (*mēchanai*) found in the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* whose contemporary equivalents can be seen in the anthropology of bricolage and the trickster.

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*Mētis* is the only form of ancient intelligence that exists in a condition of pure liquidity: it operates in the world of *becoming*, or rather, it is constantly *becoming*. In psychoanalytic terms, it could be said that *Mētis* is not the Name of the Father (i.e., the Classical) but a form of the territorial mother, the "maternal-feminine."

In times like ours, ones of prolonged crisis and radical reconsiderations, there is nothing more contemporary than the cunning intelligence of *mētis*. As Bruno Latour reminds us in *We Have Never Been Modern*, we are now used to distinguishing nature from society and culture, whereas many premodern civilizations avoided these distinctions.

It was precisely those ostensibly nonrational practices such as alchemy, astrology, phrenology, and even the occult that once bridged the distinctions between human and nonhuman, form and meaning, experience and knowledge, and paved the way for the advent of modern science.

But we are again inventing new relations between nature, society, and culture, and between subject and object, relations that have attracted the attention of contemporary artists, philosophers, architects, and writers. What changes, then, can come from a perception of antiquity revised by *mētis*? What might be the contributions of an aesthetics, an anthropology, and forms of design practice informed by it? In the era of the Anthropocene, when humans have become a geological force and the earth is increasingly man-made, could this approach generate new contracts between human beings, animals, plants, machines, and objects?

I am inevitably led to the myth of Medusa and Perseus. Consider: What could be more repulsive than the snake-infested head of the Gorgon and her death-dealing gaze? And yet Perseus managed to behead her without looking. What was the special ruse he employed in order to deal with this absolute evil? Thanks to the *cunning* of Athena, daughter of *Mētis*, Perseus was able to behead the monster by trapping her reflection on

his shield. In this moment, the gaze (the Real) is replaced by the reflection (the Apparatus): "The initial impotent fatalism ('One cannot look at the Medusa') is replaced by the ethical response ('Well, I will confront the Medusa all the same, by looking at her *differently*')."

"Looking at her *differently*." This is one more attribute of "liquid antiquity," a point of contact between the archaic and the contemporary.



## II.VII. REVOLUTION

by Miriam Leonard

Modern revolutions have little in common with the *mutatio rerum* of Roman history or the stasis, the civil strife which disturbed the Greek *polis*. We cannot equate them with Plato's *metabolai*, the quasi-natural transformation of one form of government into another, or with Polybius's *polituein anakuklosis*, the appointed recurring cycle into which human affairs are bound by reason of their always being driven to extremes. Antiquity was well acquainted with political change and the violence that went with change, but neither of them appeared to it to bring about something new altogether. Changes did not interrupt the course of what the modern age has called history, which, far from starting with a new beginning, was seen as falling back into a different stage of the cycle, prescribing a course which was preordained by the very nature of human affairs and which therefore was unchangeable.—Hannah Arendt

Revolutions are intimately bound up with our concepts of temporality. The establishment of a new calendar by the French revolutionaries is metonymic of the way in which modernity's revolutions reinvent how time is imagined. But while the identity of the modern seems to be profoundly linked to both the idea and the experience of revolution, it is less clear that this was the case for antiquity. Despite the sweeping political changes that took place in fifth-century BCE Athens, for instance, the ancients seemed reluctant to associate political developments with radical temporal

breaks. In Book Eight of the *Republic*, Plato gives a dramatic account of the succession of political constitutions, moving from aristocracy through timocracy, oligarchy through democracy, and finally to tyranny. He describes political change as the result of overreach within a particular political system that almost inevitably precipitates a transition to an alternative order. Of course, although the major thrust of the *Republic* is to offer a utopian vision of a polity, Plato's schema in Book Eight does not imagine the coming into existence of a wholly new order. The ancients thus stayed close





to the etymological roots of the word *revolution*, regarding political change as cyclical development rather than as the inauguration of a previously unimagined social organization.

The dialectic between cyclicity and rupture that runs through the intellectual history of revolution has powerful consequences for conceptualizing the relationship between ancient and modern. For Hannah Arendt, as we see above, the notion of "beginning" is particular to modern revolutions. Moreover, she links the ancient ambivalence about revolution to a more generalized worry about beginnings in Greek culture. The locus classicus of this anxiety is the wisdom of Silenus, and its most memorable formulation appears in the chorus of Sophocles' *Oedipus at Colonus*:

Not to be born is best of all:  
when life is there, the second best  
to go whence you came,  
with the best speed you may.

Much beloved by Nietzsche, this passage gives us great insight into how the Greeks confronted the horrors of existence and the sense of apprehension with which they faced the unknown. Arendt placed this Greek *weltanschauung* at the opposite end of the spectrum from Christian "glad tidings": "A child has been born to us." While Christianity embraced what she called "natality,"

the Greeks, she maintained, counted the hope associated with birth as "among the evil illusions of Pandora's box." It is no coincidence that Arendt concludes *On Revolution* by citing these very lines from Sophocles' *Oedipus*. And yet Arendt also reveals how the poet in the same play simultaneously voices the nihilism of Silenus and the democratic utopianism of Theseus. The life-affirming qualities of Theseus' *polis* are the antidote to the self-annihilating pessimism of Sophocles' choral ode. Moreover, the *polis* as "a space of men's free deeds" contrasts strikingly with the passivity and heavy predestination of Silenus' worldview. Arendt shows that although the Greeks may have misunderstood natality, they didn't devalue action. In fact, they modeled in the *polis* a sphere of action that became the basis for all subsequent ideas of the political. And because action is necessarily future-oriented, Arendt's conception of ancient temporality is more complex than it first appears. After making claims about the absence of revolutions in antiquity, then, in the closing lines of her book, Arendt shows how the ancient legacy of action and its utopian promise remain central to the modern conceptualization of revolution.

The power of this legacy also elucidates Karl Marx's vision of revolution in "The Eighteenth Brumaire," in which he famously formulates Rome's role in



the French Revolution as an instance of history repeating itself:

Men make their own history but they do not make it just as they please; they do not make it under circumstances chosen by themselves, but under circumstances directly encountered, given and transmitted from the past. The tradition of all the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the brain of the living. And just when they seem engaged in revolutionizing themselves and things, in creating something that has never yet existed, precisely in such periods of revolutionary crisis they anxiously conjure up the spirits of the past to their service and borrow from them names, battle-cries and costumes in order to present the new scene of world history in this time-honored disguise and this borrowed language.

In Marx's view, the uniforms that the French revolutionaries borrowed were unmistakably Roman, an indication of modernity's reluctance to embrace "beginnings." In addition, he saw the modern revolutionaries' failure to create their own language as a symptom of their inability to fully "make their own history." We should think here of Jacques-Louis David's paintings as the ultimate figuration of this tendency: the *Tennis Court Oath*, left unfinished in

1794, uses the visual vocabulary of the *Oath of the Horatii*, completed a decade earlier, in which the execution of the king is imagined as Brutus' tyrannicide. The death of Marat is a replay of the death of Socrates. The ancients, far from being reluctant revolutionaries, provide the script for a political upheaval that modernity has yet to fully comprehend in its own terms. The spiraling temporalities of revolution thus illustrate history at its most liquid: they reveal how an untimely antiquity continually disrupts the temporalities of modernity.

## II.VIII. CROSSING

by Phiroze Vasunia

Is there something painful about crossing? The roots of the word suggest there is: *crossing* is derived from *cross*, which in turn is derived from the Latin *crux*, the word used in the Vulgate to refer to the structure on which Jesus was crucified. *Crux* is a translation of the Greek word *stauros*, an upright pale, or stake, and so a cross. To bear the *stauros* is to suffer voluntarily, says the standard *Greek-English Lexicon*. There was labor, exhaustion, and distress in ancient crossings: Hannibal cajoled his weary troops and elephants across ice-covered peaks, at the cost of many lives, human and animal; Xerxes flogged the Hellespont as he attempted to bridge the divide between Asia and Europe; Caesar crossed the Rubicon and unleashed a bloody war in Italy. These were momentous crossings, across vast landscapes and seascapes. They were impactful, violent, symbolic, and are destined to remain in history books for all time.

Crossing the Hellespont or the Alps—indeed, crossing from one culture to another—could also be positive, fruitful, and invigorating. Herodotus, Pausanias, and the narrator of Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* were energetic travelers who learned about themselves and the world as a result of their border

crossings. Another intrepid traveler, Apollonius of Tyana, is said to have remarked, "To a wise man, everywhere is Hellas." That might sound parochial, but it also implies that someone who is genuinely interested in the world finds opportunities to learn about culture everywhere. Jacques Derrida, modern sage and inveterate traveler, casts another perspective on travel and philosophy: "In principle," he says, "a philosopher should be without a passport, even undocumented [*sans papiers*]; he should never be asked for his visa. He should not represent a nationality, or even a national language." Derrida says that philosophers must operate above narrow national frameworks and be ready to cross to other cultures, whether they are national, educational, intellectual, or philosophical.

"At the same time," he adds, "philosophy is always registered in idioms, starting with Greek." Derrida poses this as a challenge for philosophers: they must be as universal in their thinking as possible while at the same time taking into account their own particular genealogies, filiations, and formations. He names his own philosophical formation as "Greek," which is perhaps unsurprising given his own identification as a European philosopher (albeit one who was born in Algeria,







and who never ceased to examine and analyze Eurocentrism wherever he encountered it). But his remarks raise other questions: Are there no philosophical traditions outside of Europe? Does philosophy only speak Greek? And how Greek is Greek philosophy? There are philosophical crossings in antiquity, and Greek philosophy itself emerged from the Greek encounter with Persian and Egyptian traditions.

The artistic productions of Alexandria and Gandhara are evidence of cultural crossings in the ancient world, but it is a mistake to think that the activity in these regions was exceptional. Greek and Roman art and literature were fundamentally crossed from the beginning: Homer would look very different without Near Eastern literature; the kouros draws on recognizably Egyptian antecedents. Even so, readers and viewers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries were reluctant to accept the realities of crossing, mixing, and hybridization in antiquity. Erwin Rohde, a nineteenth-century classical scholar, did not think the ancient Greek novel could have been influenced by developments in the non-Greek world and saw it as an exclusively Greek creation. Still, he also regarded the ancient novel as derivative and decadent, since it was "contaminated" by other genres. The language of purity and miscegenation has an unfortunate tendency to appear

in discussions of cultural crossing. The notion of an insular Greek excellence was precisely what Martin Bernal sought to counter in his sensational 1987 book *Black Athena*: in his view, Greece was influenced by African and Asian civilizations and was "a thoroughly mixed and eclectic culture."

Not all classical scholars have had problems with mixing and hybridity. In the 1920s, Wilhelm Kroll wrote a piece about genre crossing ("Die Kreuzung der Gattungen") in which he argued that it was central to the progress of Latin literature. Kroll used biological and "family-tree" assumptions in discussing genres, but he recognized that Latin literature would not have come about without mixing. As far back as the seventeenth century, Pierre-Daniel Huet, regarded as the first modern theorist of the novel, wrote a colorful treatise in which he argued that the ancient novel was multicultural, owing its existence to Persian and Eastern writers. Huet's essay is full of examples that cross and connect, vaulting the reader from one culture to another. His claim mainly applies to prose fiction, but one of the implications of his argument is that works of art remain open. Texts, songs, painting, and sculpture move, catch the interest of onlookers, invite crossings, and then develop new borders or beginnings. This process has no fixed beginning

or end, and it is neither linear nor predictable. A song gives rise to an epic, an epic to a vase, a vase to a statue, and that, in turn, inspires a poem. A crossing can give birth to something beautiful.

As the film's title suggests, Sergei Eisenstein's *The Old and the New* points in two directions. This 1929 film about the industrialization of the Soviet countryside stages a dramatic collision between distinct and seemingly irreconcilable phases of sociocultural development: on the one hand, a deep past inhabited by the peasantry and associated with the cyclical time of agricultural production, and on the other, a future society taking shape in accordance with the laws of linear historical progress through the activities of its anointed agent, the industrial proletariat. Certainly one of the most curious aspects of *The Old and the New*, ideologically speaking, is that instead of displacing the benighted peasantry with industrial workers—as standard Marxist narratives of progress would have it—the film holds the two together in a protracted embrace. Eisenstein envisioned the Bolshevik policy of a *smychka* (“coupling”) between the peasantry and proletariat not as a displacement but as a chiasmic exchange of properties between the two. To wit: by the final scene, the film's protagonists—the *traktorist* from the city and the woman from the collective farm—have switched places, the former proletarian lounging lazily in his peasant tunic upon a horse-drawn

cart while the erstwhile farm girl drives past on a shiny tractor wearing the streamlined livery of an airplane pilot.

Such reversals between the old and the new can be seen throughout the film, although nowhere as strikingly as in the notorious sequence featuring a machine for separating cream from milk. In this scene, which Eisenstein identified as the film's peripeteia (on par, he claimed, with the moment in his landmark film when *Potemkin* bursts through the ranks of other battleships), a group of peasants huddle around the new piece of equipment. Like everything else in *The Old and the New*, this object points simultaneously ahead, to the future of material abundance made possible by Russia's industrialization, and also backward, to a prehistorical past of transcultural archetypes and myth. Symptomatically, in his writing on the film, Eisenstein compared this separator to King Arthur's grail. As the scene accelerates toward its orgasmic crescendo, the chorus of peasants—each “emotionally immobile, like a mask in antique theater”—bears witness to a series of miraculous transformations: the centrifugal interior mechanism of the separator is inexplicably transformed by Eisenstein into a spinning roulette wheel; cream issuing from a spout





splashes into a bucket, but then begins suddenly to pour over the hood of a tractor as well; propelled by a strapping peasant who pumps away furiously at the handle, the explosion of white liquid gushing from the spout is mirrored in the vertical jets of a fountain, and then echoed again in the sweeping current of a hydroelectric dam. Through tumbling resemblances like these, which are often edited so seamlessly that the spectator barely registers the difference between these objects, Eisenstein multiplies their semantic valences, causing each to dehisce into associative chains of increasing complexity.

Yuri Lotman's late studies on the mechanisms of cultural invention help shed light not just on the curious temporality of Eisenstein's film, but also on the interpretive perplexities that emerge in the wake of this encounter between old and new. Specifically, Lotman observed that this redoubled temporality was the very condition for the emergence of unprecedented cultural forms. Building on the work of the Russian-born Belgian chemist Ilya Prigogine, Lotman explained that the moment of maximal complexity in a given cultural system "is situated between the past and the future and is as if ripped out of time." An incubator of the new, this interval of maximal complexity cannot be parsed according to categories of chronological time such as past, present, or future.

Because this revolutionary interval entails both dissolution and convergence, Lotman designated this interval with the Russian word *vzryv*, which can mean both "explosion" and "implosion": "The moment of the *vzryv* is not just the point of formation of new possibilities, but the moment of the creation of another reality, a leap and a re-comprehension of memory." At this moment of maximal cultural informativity, the past and the future become symmetrical, Lotman observed. From a vantage within this zone of historical suspension, all variations of history appear "equiprobable," and the old and the new intermingle and recombine. The moment of *vzryv* is a moment of pure virtuality, in which all courses and all outcomes are still possible. "The events that were realized and those that were not realized at a moment of *vzryv* are variants, and could easily be substituted for one another."

Importantly for our understanding of Eisenstein's film, Lotman also associates the moment of *vzryv* with a condition of heightened hermeneutic indeterminacy. "The state of *vzryv* is characterized by the moment of equalization of all oppositions," he writes. "That which is different appears to be the same. This renders possible unexpected leaps into completely different, unpredictable organizational structures." The convergence of the classical and the futurist in *The Old and the New* spawns a whole

series of interpretive paradoxes that cannot be easily resolved in favor of either term. As a result, the moment of *vzryv* is experienced as a kind of compression or symbolic overdetermination: the revolutionary "explosion" is perforce a space of hermeneutic "coalescence" and an interval of "semiotic uncertainty," Lotman writes. The historical condition of *vzryv* thus gives rise to a culture of profound irony, for the symbols of a culture at the moment of explosion always display two incompatible meanings at once. One phenomenon divides into two: separator and grail, labor and copulation, hydroelectric dam and cascade of cream, industrial production and pastoral idyll, spindle mechanism and roulette wheel. What we have, according to Lotman, is a kind of "double reading of one and the same cultural fact," a simultaneity of antitheses rather than their sublation. At this moment, the deep past becomes indistinguishable from the society to come.



III



# INSTITUTION

### III.J JEFF KOONS

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** Antiquity seems to have become increasingly powerful for you over the past ten years. What has drawn you to it?

**JEFF KOONS [JK]** What myth and art bring about is a sense of concreteness, a sense that we each have a self, that we are unique and have a place within culture and community. In my *Antiquity* series, which began in 2008, I wanted to show how our external cultural life emulates our interior life as well as our biology. The ways our genes and DNA are connected parallel the connectivity of our cultural life. I wanted to show that I have become a different person, that the viewer becomes a different person, after coming into contact with the work of an artist like Manet, and that Manet became different after encountering Goya, and Goya after Velázquez, and Velázquez after Ariadne. I've always loved the connectivity of art history; I believe art morphs our genes and our DNA. You know, art, like life, is completely ethereal. It's really just a chain of chemical reactions—a floodgate opens and one molecule affects another.

**BH** So the connection with ancient art is operating at a very deep level for you.

**JK** My interest in antiquity really comes from thinking about metaphysics, the immediate and the eternal. I'm interested in what it means to be a human being, to have one foot in the past while at the same time walking in the present. Some people think history is confining, that it narrows us and keeps us from making gestures to the future, but I really believe the opposite. I think that history can change who we are and help us walk into the future more confidently.

**BH** You seem to be particularly inspired in the series by a cluster of mythological figures—Pan and Erōs, satyrs—all figures that have a kind of animal or vital energy, an energy we associate with nature.

**JK** I think of Pan as a symbol of the eternal. There are two variations on the eternal: the biological, the life energy that leapfrogs onward in space and time, and the eternal as it exists in the realm of ideas—Platonism and pure form. I want my work to be in constant dialogue with these two realms.

**BH** What about Aphrodite? You channeled her in your 2005 shoot where Gretchen Mol posed as a young Bettie Page.

**JK** I love the image of Aphrodite. She's the symbol of Mother Nature, of abundance, life, and pure enjoyment. I think my journey within art has been one of learning to accept myself and to approach and enjoy work that deals







with internal life and self-acceptance. When I engage with Aphrodite, that journey takes the form of going from a subjective sensory state to a more social realm. Once you've accepted yourself you automatically want to accept others and to maintain the community around you. When you deal with myth, art starts to become much more social, more about community. As an artist you always have ideas and you understand different sensations, but the process is to move forward and share and be as generous as possible.

**BH** And looking to antiquity and the history of art more broadly has been part of this process?

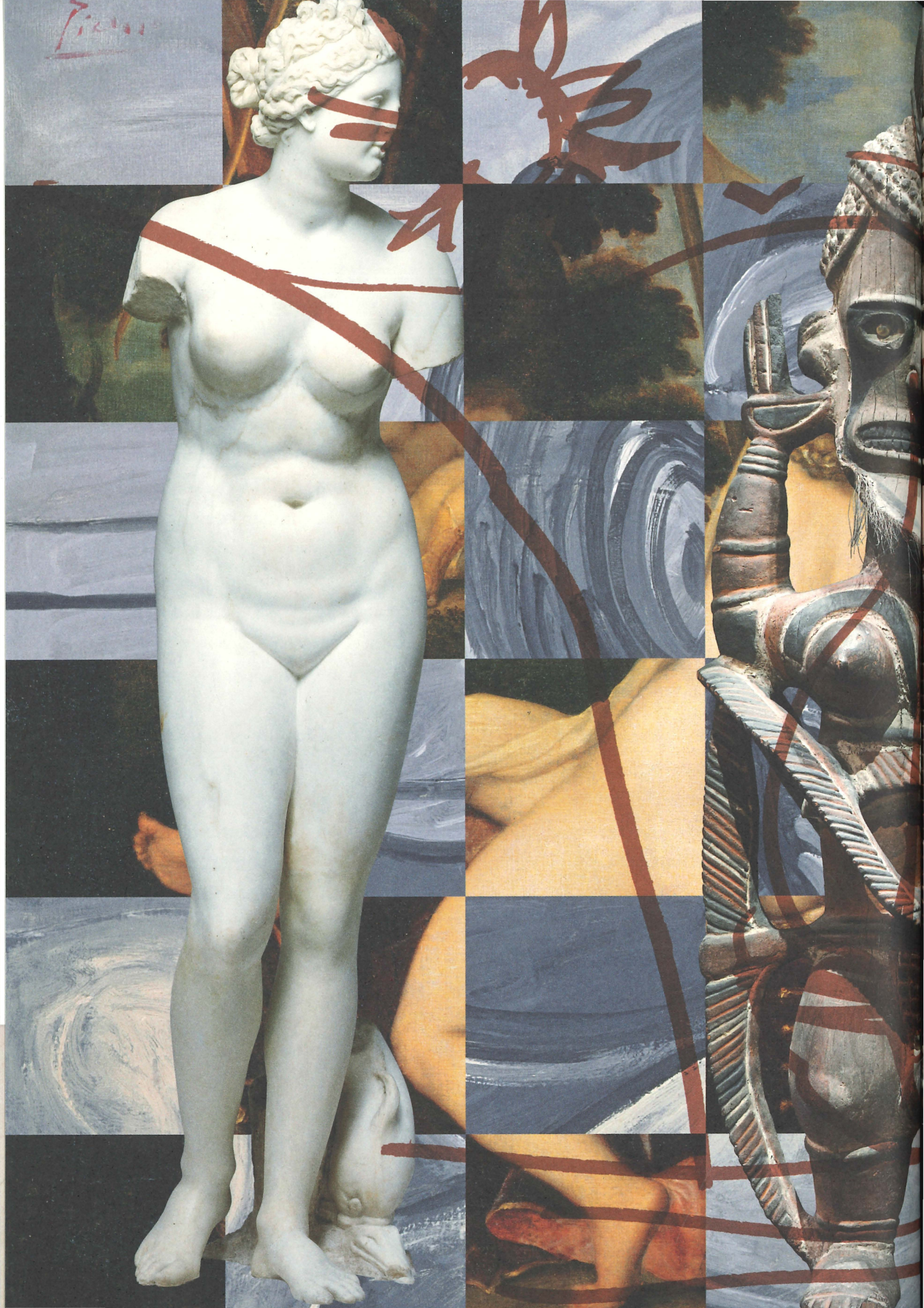
**JK** I think that relates to the idea of acceptance, to giving meaning and love to something outside the self. I'm interested in giving myself over to things and to other people. I love the work of Géricault, Goltzius, Spranger, Leonardo, Boucher, and, even farther back, of Praxiteles. I wanted to work with images of their art so I could give myself over to them. I wanted to start a dialogue about the ideas behind their works, about the artists as human beings, and about what they were giving themselves over to in their own environments and cultural histories. When you deal with antique pieces there's always an aspect of holding them in reference, of caring for them and desiring to better understand their use, their function, the contexts that they might have been viewed in. Expanding one's parameters as vastly as possible, I believe, is the highest level of consciousness. It's transcendence.

**BH** The artists you mention all come from a Western, classicizing tradition. Have you been influenced by other traditions as well?

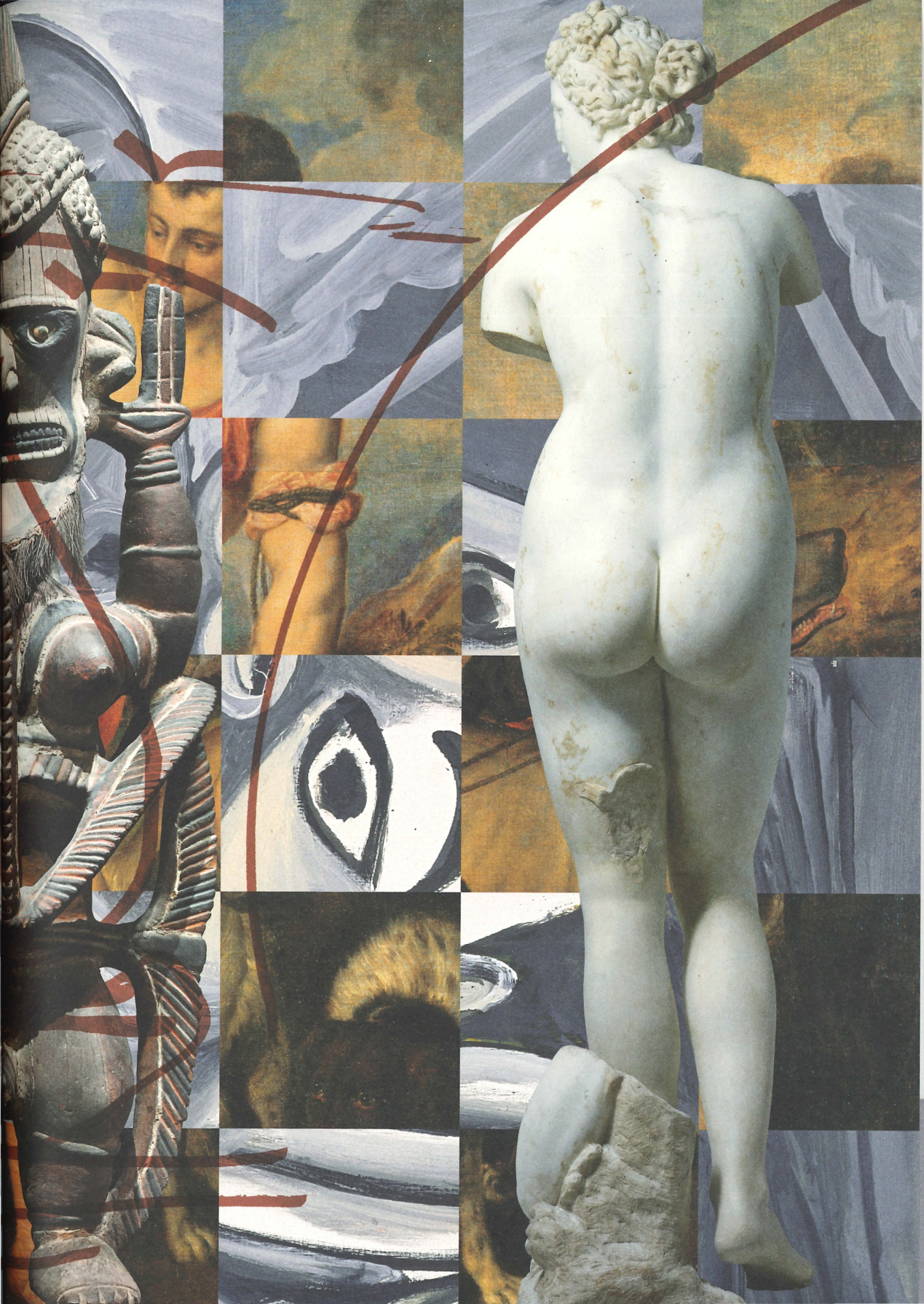
**JK** I was born in rural northern Pennsylvania and I never even traveled to Europe until I was about twenty, so my cultural and art historical background is very Western. I have more understanding and involvement with the culture I grew up in, but I love to make non-Western references. I've often used the imagery of Utamaro, the amazing Japanese printmaker, in my work, and I like to incorporate influences from China and Japan. Between 2004 and 2016 I made a series called *Hulk Elvis* where I worked with an inflatable version of the Hulk, the cartoon character, to show how he's similar to the guardian gods you see in Eastern cultures. I placed him in different situations, and I made *Hulk (Organ)* [2004–14]. It's a working organ, and when you turn it on, it thunders like a guardian god presenting itself.

**BH** One of the things that comes through in the *Hulk Elvis* series is this idea of repetition. Throughout your career you've worked in series, and with









reproducing images. How does the copy figure into the *Antiquity* series?

**JK** Many of the most wonderful antique works we wouldn't even know about had it not been for Roman copies. If you think about a copy in Platonic terms, you have an idea of the chair, and then every other chair is just a version of that original chair. And when it comes to procreation, biological procreation happens in one way, but the inanimate world procreates through reflections. If I'm working with a copy, I'm doing it as a reference, because what I'm really interested in is the Platonic idea of the piece. If I'm working with a plaster cast and putting a gazing ball in front of it, for example, I want to refer to *Silenus and the Infant Dionysus*, or to the *Mona Lisa*. It's not about the object per se, but about the original artist and the artists whom that person felt connected to.

**BH** Plato was famously against art, but he became important to the larger thinking about the classical tradition of beauty and form, and its aspiration to something higher. What is Platonism for you? Is it the idea of transcendence?

**JK** Platonism is about developing self-knowledge and experiencing transcendence. It's about finding the freedom to walk out of that cave and achieve the highest level of consciousness possible while also being aware of a responsibility to share that information with your community and society. It's a beautiful philosophy. Plato's belief that the eternal exists through perfect forms and mathematics really offers answers while at the same time remaining completely ethereal. I enjoy Platonism because of the rigor, because of how Plato looked at the world and tried to make meaning out of it. Even though I look at the soul very differently, his ideas bring things into concreteness for me.

**BH** What is your thinking about the soul? It's a term we don't often throw around these days.

**JK** Like I said earlier, I think life is just a chain of chemical reactions. Our biology is the result of chemicals reacting with the external world to cause reactions, and in response to that, consciousness is nothing more than stored chemical reactions that create memories. I think there's ongoing potential because the elements in the world continue to have chemical reactions, but I don't believe in a sense of true self, or an eternal soul, or anything like that. I believe in the elements. I believe in physics, and in gravity and the elements and matter and dark matter, and all the other things that are in play.

**BH** The idea of the elements and dark matter brings us back to the energies that





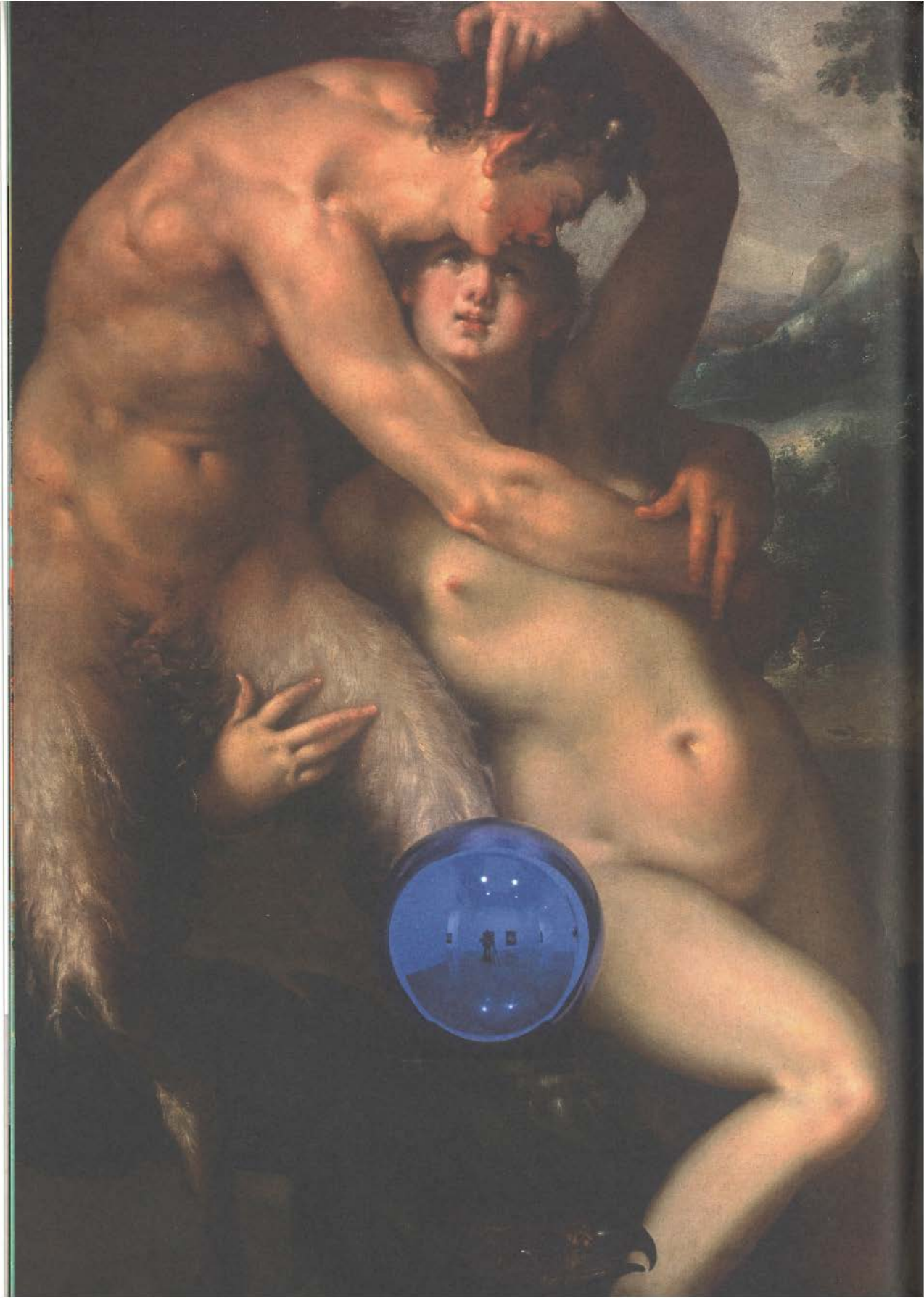












circulate through the natural world. In a number of your antiquity paintings you've included drawings of grass or traditional pastoral backgrounds. Has the pastoral as an ancient way of thinking about nature influenced you?

**JK** John Dewey, the American philosopher, talks about life as the experience of the internal adapting to the external, and the external to the internal. If I think of the pastoral, I think of this dialogue, the awe and wonderment that we feel toward the external world and at the same time the awe and wonderment we feel internally. It's like the enlightenment of both the internal and the external.

**BH** Like the sense of the sublime.

**JK** Absolutely.

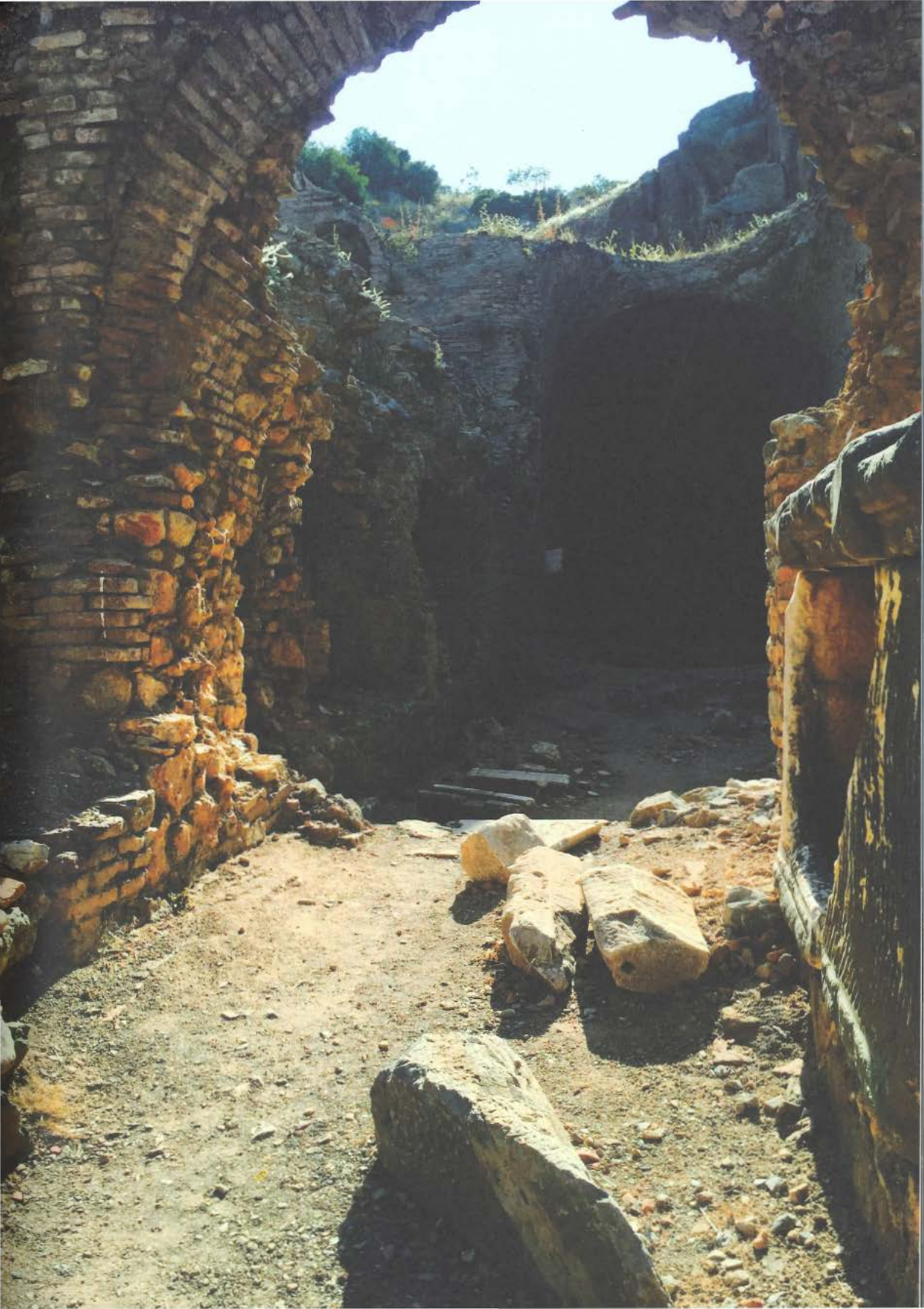
**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** How did you get interested in ancient Greece?

**ASAD RAZA [AR]** In 2010 I was invited to participate in "The Marathon Marathon," which was a series of interviews and readings and events organized by Hans Ulrich Obrist at the Acropolis Museum. I was only in Athens for two or three days, but I had never been to the city before and it was the first time I saw the Parthenon and the Acropolis. The Acropolis really shocked me because before I got close to it, I was seeing it all the time. I remember I was driving down Ermou in a car driven by my hosts, Andreas and Angelo, and I saw it out the window, the same way that you would see, say, the Empire State Building in New York. It made me realize that the thing that occupies the place of the beacon in this city, the thing you can see from everywhere, is this famous site from antiquity. Because I'd always thought about ancient Greece and ancient Rome as abstract places I could only contact through books. Later, Tom Meaney sent me Freud's essay about having a very similar experience. Being in Athens gave me a very strong sense that you could have an embodied connection to a very long-ago time.

**BH** So that experience inspired you to do a project in 2014 at the Roman Agora in Athens. Could you talk about that?

**AR** I'm interested in spaces that create some kind of resonance, not in making a work that goes in a white cube and could do the same thing in a different white cube. At that time, I had just produced a project with Tino Sehgal at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York called *This Progress* [2010], in which four generations of people—a child, a teenager, an adult, and an older adult—take the visitor on a walk up the Guggenheim spiral and discuss the question of progress. In Athens, I suddenly had the idea that it would be an amazing place to do an immaterial project like that, something involving a conversation. The Agora is in the same central zone of ancient Athens as the Acropolis, and it's a ruin, but it's all still there and it's a space people go to. The idea of juxtaposing this with a dialogical piece felt like something that had to be done, and it seemed appropriate because Socratic dialogue is, let's say, somehow native to the site. If you go back to the original meaning of *agora*, it's a market and a place for speeches, a place where the citizens of Athens addressed each other, where bodies and consumables and ideas were exchanged.









- BH** How did the topography of the Agora shape the way people moved through the piece? Did you think about how their movements would activate the history of the site?
- AR** Well, the topography was very complicated. I collaborated with Tino and Louise Höjer, who works on a lot of Tino's exhibitions as a dramaturge and director, and we tried to find a route that would take visitors through different elements of the Agora. Toward the end, I changed the finishing point so that visitors would stop at a very nondescript place near a spring flowing down the hill of the Acropolis. That felt appropriate to me because it was an end that didn't tell you you'd reached the end; it wasn't a big spectacle, there were just springs that had been bubbling on this hill for a long time. There's something about water springing from underground that relates to inspiration and to the ongoing, ever-flowing emergence of new things. It's a little Heracleitean.

We didn't want to pretend we were going back in time. But at the same time, in art, there's an obsession with the idea of creating a new kind of space that's clear, neutral, and purely formal; that was the predominant idea of modernism. In that space, the idea is to examine fragments of the past from the perspective of being divorced from the ritualistic or primitive modes of behavior that those objects are associated with. But actually, to me, we're still completely connected to all kinds of processes, life practices, rituals, meaning constructions, and feelings that belong to a long chronology going into the deep past, one that's more than five or six thousand years old. But in the last hundred years or so we've actually convinced ourselves that we're divorced from this past. I'm interested in the idea that we're not actually as separate as we think we are, and that sometimes we should do things inside of this deep past, or in relation to it. But not too explicitly. So, if you're speaking to somebody about what progress is and walking through the Roman Agora, then I'm not really making the connection for you. It's not a didactic experience and it's not a scholarly experience, it's something more like a dialogue.

- BH** Let's talk about your project on Pan. The cave of Pan is a totally different space than the agora. It's outside the city. What got you interested in Pan?
- AR** I went to Marathon in 2014 with Nadjia Argyropoulou, and while we were there I discovered that there's a cave of Pan up in one of the hills. And something about this cave connected with me because I'd seen a bunch



of Pan sculptures over the previous month: there's a famous one in the National Archaeological Museum in Athens, a great one in the Pergamon museum in Berlin, and there are others that all have a very interesting relationship to the idea of the primitive. For instance, the one in Athens has Aphrodite threatening to hit Pan with her sandal, and Pan is shorter than her and a little scared. She's basically trying to ward off this horny pest, and Cupid is also floating above Pan getting ready to shoot an arrow at him. Pan is being repudiated as uncouth or vulgar or pastoral—he's unsophisticated, and he needs to be replaced by the Olympian gods. Pan, weirdly enough, is a god, but he's also more like an animal than a human, and he's less metaphysical than the Olympian gods—he doesn't live up on a mountain in the clouds, but in the forest, where he kind of creeps around.

So the idea of the forest and the gods that came before the Olympian gods started to grip my imagination more and more. As I mentioned, I'm interested in the idea that these practices, rituals, and elements of oral culture from the deep past are still with us—we just don't know it. Pan struck me as one of the few characters from the deep past who's still recognizable today, though the worship of Pan dates back to the Neolithic era, not just the Bronze Age, not just classical antiquity. We don't know what these ritual practices were, but we do know that the Olympian gods, classical antiquity, and the last two thousand years of culture, especially what we call Western culture, have made a strong effort to repudiate them as potentially perverted, vulgar, and weird. Satan has a lot of characteristics in common with Pan: they both have hooves and horns, they're both loners who were ejected from the domain of the gods and forced to dwell somewhere on their own. So, naturally, I got interested—who was this character? How did he survive to today?

**BH** How did that inform the dramaturgy of the piece you developed for Frieze Projects?

**AR** I thought the best way to learn about the oral culture of people devoted to worshipping Pan was not just to abstractly study it but to somehow reawaken it. You always have to pass oral culture on to younger people, so I assembled a group of people between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one or so in London, and we hung out and I would basically show them books, little Pan sculptures, and other related materials, and we would eat beans and rice and talk. I let them come up with ways of talking about Pan through things



that were going on in their own lives. So at the fair, visitors would come into this room where the participants were having conversations about themselves and Pan.

**BH** Yes, it's not like there's a book you read about Pan and there's a ritual and everybody learns the ritual. There's much more of a sense of wild mythic invention—each person engages with the material and makes it anew. We tend to think of that as a contemporary dynamic, but even in the past, in tragedy, in epic, in the *Homeric Hymns*, there's a constant reinvention of the material.

**AR** Yes, it was important that the participants develop their own authentic interest in him. The thing I found interesting was that they really gravitated toward the idea of Pan as an unsuccessful loner, a character famous for failing to seduce fauns and nymphs. They identified with him as a kind of loser, and also as someone smaller than an adult human. They told me that they found him more interesting and relatable than a perfect human being. To me, the project was about making visitors feel as if they had come upon a newly active cell of people who were still relating deeply to this Pan.

**BH** This makes me think of our discussion earlier about your first time in Athens. It's interesting that in your dealing with antiquity you ended up most engaged with this primal figure, not an Olympian god, but a figure who authorizes a different way of thinking about beauty or truth or knowledge. And I wonder, how does Pan enable an encounter with antiquity that's not a repetition of, "Oh look, there's the Parthenon?"

**AR** Well, I really do share the feeling Freud expressed in his essay about going to the Acropolis, the feeling of "it's all true," in the sense that I was also amazed that the Greeks really did build this thing and "it," meaning ancient Greece, really does exist. But what that existence means is subject to different interpretations, and it's not only meaningful to people who consider themselves to be part of what we call Western culture—people in Pakistan consider Socrates part of their philosophical inheritance. They would be very surprised to learn that he's supposed to be the father of "Western culture." Pan points out the internal contradictions in those kinds of stories, because even though he comes from the same lineage, he's antithetical to a lot of those values. He cracks the tradition apart from the past rather than the future, and he's the among the figures that connect the pre-classical period to the period of human history from one hundred thousand years ago to ten thousand years ago.



To me, the trajectory of my practice is about letting go of a certain ideal of order and perfection and building a way to work with forms that are more embodied and more about exchanges. I'm not interested in following the cultural model we have today, in which certain people do something really well and they put their work somewhere and people look at it. There's a very, very strong division between production and consumption in that model, and there's no touching. That's very different from whatever was happening in the caves of Pan. I have a feeling that worshipers in those caves didn't look at stuff from a distance. I'm pretty sure that they made sounds together, they spoke together, and maybe there were other kinds of embodied intersubjective processes. I've become more and more interested in that. Because we don't have any writing or other kinds of memory technologies from that period, thinking about ancient Greece can actually lead you to places that can only be accessed through imagination and bodily practices. Rituals, art, literature, and poetry are all ways of pointing at something that you can't fully grasp. They're a way for me to think about Pan, and of these moments from the deep past as things you can still experience. Something that can't be finished and can't be known completely can provide us with an open space to move around in. It can allow us to create new practices, and to relate them to practices we've discovered and imagined from the past. That's the material I like to work with.

**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** I thought we could start by talking about your *Hippias Minor* project [2015], which involved a new translation of Plato's controversial early dialogue. In it, Socrates argues that there is no difference between a person who lies and one who tells the truth, and that the person who consciously engages in wrongdoing is actually the better man. Why was that text interesting to you?

**PAUL CHAN [PC]** Among Plato's dialogues, the *Hippias Minor* is the one that arguably makes the least sense, and I think I am most attracted to things that make no sense. I was also attracted to it because it articulated something I'd been thinking about for a couple of years involving the Greek word *polytropos*, which can mean either "lying" or "cunning," depending on how you translate it. It's the word Homer uses to describe Odysseus in the *Odyssey*.

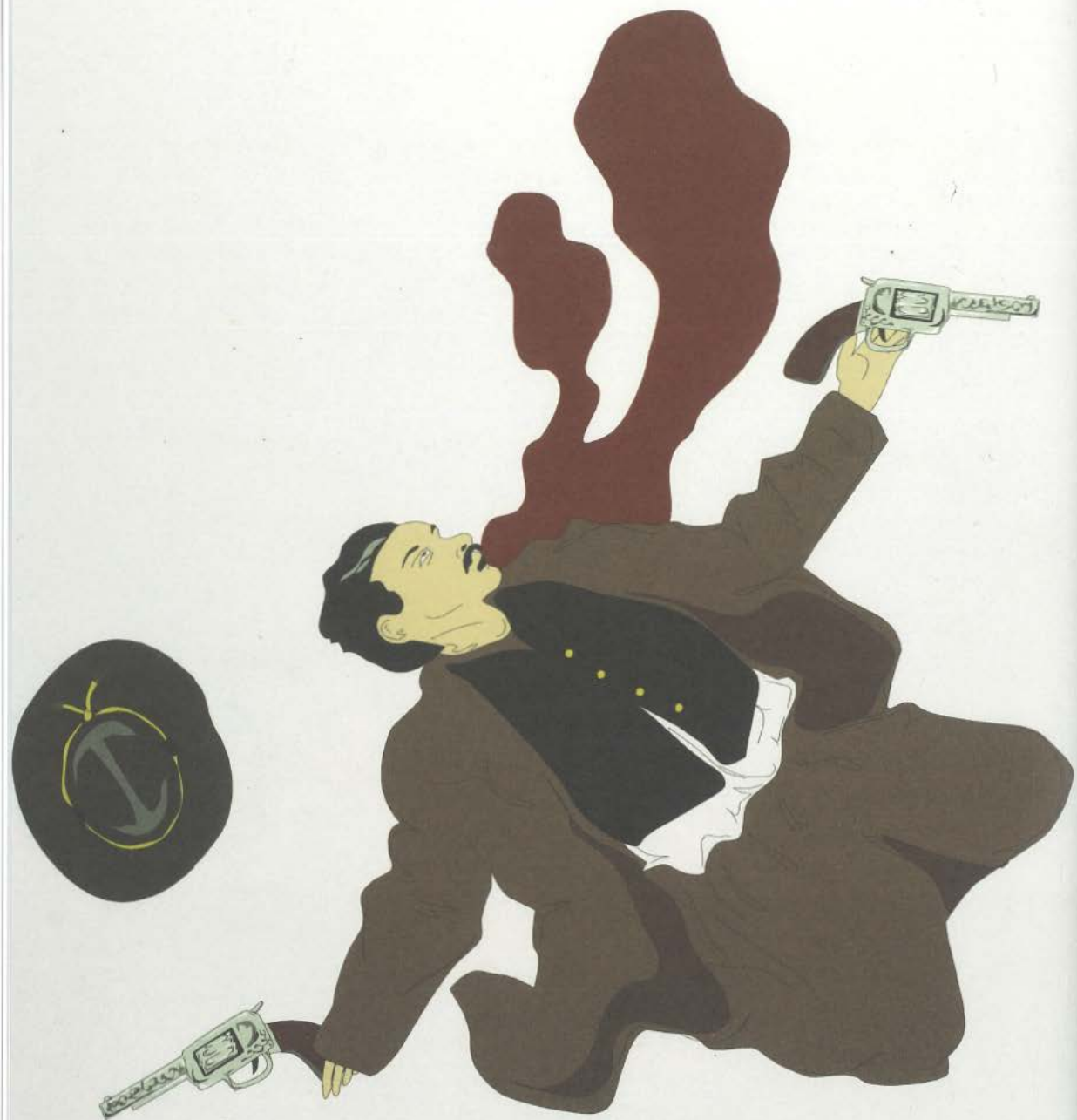
What happened was that we wanted to make better sense of the dialogue given the times in which we live, and so we got a translator, Sarah Ruden, to do a new translation that we felt could give the text life in today's world. I like to think we've done that, because our *Hippias Minor* has less to do with lying and more to do with the notion of *cunning*. I'm interested in *cunning* as a creative act, since it requires imagination and critical ways of thinking. I also had in mind a recent translation of the *Odyssey* by the poet Stephen Mitchell, which was the first to describe Odysseus as infinitely cunning. Before, he had been described as wily or crafty. Those are nice words, but nothing quickens the heart like *cunning*. The real breakthrough with *Hippias* was that we shifted the focus of the dialogue from figuring out whether or not it was good or bad to lie, to the question of whether or not *cunning* is worthy of our intellectual life.

Underlying that is the issue of whether or not we can be persuasive enough without the use of violence and force to get what we want. That's what Odysseus tried to do. It's true, he was a complete bastard and he killed many people, but within the spectrum of Greek heroes I would say he's the one who used his head more than his sword, especially in the *Odyssey*. He talked his way out of things more than anything else. Or maybe it's that he was most compelling when he talked people into things.

**BH** Plato does seem to believe that rhetoric—the violence of language—can potentially be more damaging than physical violence. What do you think about that? How do you see the ethics of cunning?



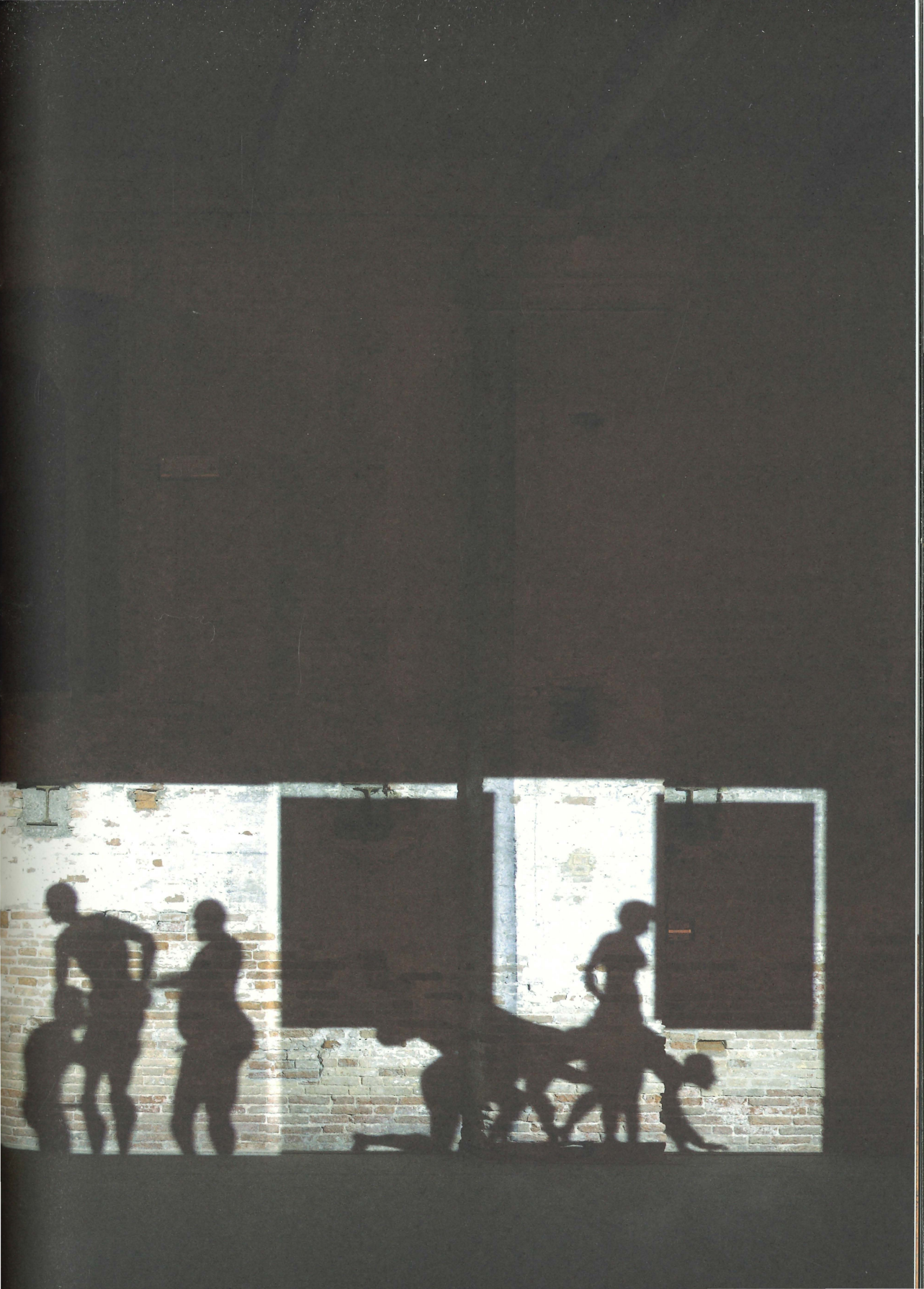




- PC** It's Plato's prerogative to think that, and it's an important thought to have. I personally don't think it's for me, but the idea of limiting the spectrum of what we can say is a worthy reminder of how we can be persuasive without the use of actual force. I think you can have forceful speech without it being violent. I think you can be persuasive without being extortionist. That is not an ontological question—it may not even be an epistemological question. That, to me, is an aesthetic question.
- BH** So, for you, there is a line between the aesthetics of cunning and the abuse of cunning?
- PC** I don't think it's up to the person who is trying to be cunning to be less cunning. I think it's up to the people listening to assess the persuasiveness of the argument and to be vigilant about what they're hearing. Those are the checks and balances. My loose and reckless reading of the Greeks has given me the sense that the interdependency and dialogic nature of how we come to reason is real. It's not a perspective, it's not an outlook, that's just what it is. Working with others means you have to convince them without resorting to threats of force or the authority of myths that what you're doing or saying is true. This to me is the epitome of reasoning, which is the most creative thing we can do. Reason is reasonable insofar as it is *social*. One can reason on one's own, but the people who reason by themselves tend to go insane. Look at Nietzsche.
- BH** Nietzsche's engagement with Greek philosophy was one of the key resources for you while you were preparing for your 2014 solo show at the Schaulager in Basel, and the figure of Odysseus was another. There are so many different versions of Odysseus in antiquity—in the *Hippias*, he's the consummate liar, but then in the Stoics and the Neoplatonists, he comes back as the hero of reason. Were you thinking about these different Odysseuses when working on the exhibition?
- PC** The main Odysseus I had to contend with was the one Adorno talked about. And in a minor way the one Erich Auerbach described, but Adorno was the one who articulated what for me was the main claim about what Odysseus is to us today. Adorno thought that Odysseus was the proto-capitalist. He thought Odysseus was the great liar, and like all exceptional philosophical minds he thought lying was something we needed to stamp out in order to have a more just society. Cunning to him was beneath reason. Plato also thought that, right? I mean, there's a whole philosophical, religious, political,







social history of people believing that they embodied a kind of reason, a higher intellectual capacity that could see through the lies and the duplicity, through the cunning. But they usually ended up accusing people of being cunning and killing them. Back then, same as now. That's just the world we live in. So as much as I respect Adorno, he believed cunning was opposed to reason. He thought Odysseus was a liar.

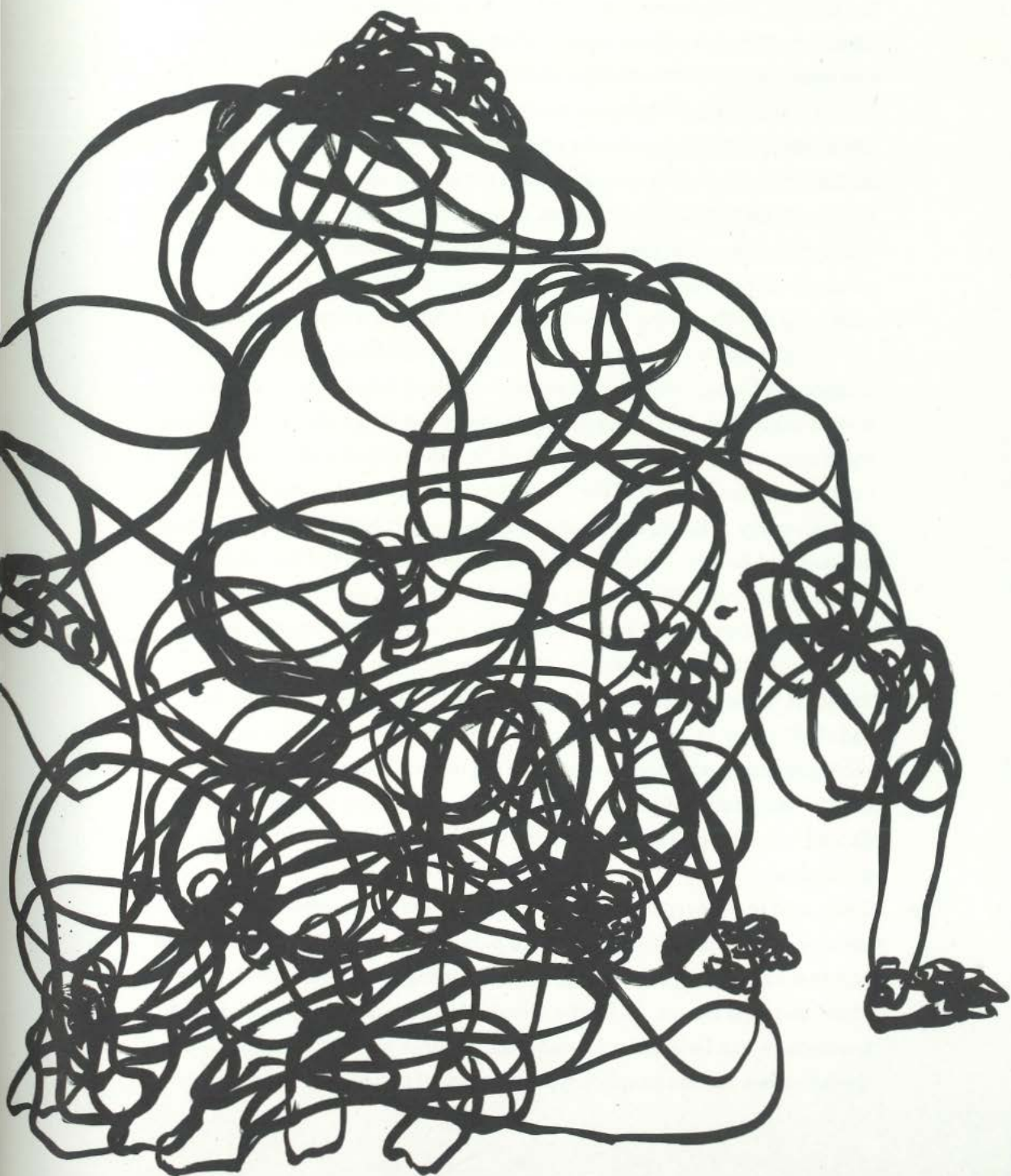
**BH** It's like one can reread Adorno's notion of art as the space of redemption from deception by rereading Odysseus.

**PC** That's right. I think Adorno's notion of art is thrilling and courageous. There's no one, as far as I'm concerned, in the history of philosophy who believed more in art than Adorno in the twentieth century. But even though he defended the idea of art, the concrete examples he had were narrow, to say the least. And the Greeks didn't cut it. Was Odysseus a kind of symptom of a larger failure of antiquity to manifest what Adorno thought was art? I'm thinking about Adorno in the larger tradition of German Hellenism. For Nietzsche the Greeks really were it, they were the aesthetic ideal. But not for Adorno.

But there was also a political purpose to his engagement with the Greeks, right? The reason why Adorno cowrote *Dialectic of Enlightenment* and why he portrayed Odysseus the way he did was because he was in exile. It was 1944 and he was in California, not in Germany. He knew how fetishized the Greeks were in German culture, how they represented "the myth of origins"—the purest race, the purest culture. Adorno's courageous, inspiring critique redescribed the Greeks against what he saw happening in his own country. Auerbach did the same with his famous essay on Odysseus. He wrote that essay I think in 1944, the same time as Adorno, and he had also escaped Germany. He was in Istanbul. Auerbach and Adorno were dealing with Odysseus because they knew that a criticism of the Greeks would amount to a political protest against what they saw as the debasement and the depravity of German politics and the Nazis. I think Adorno's portrayal of Odysseus and what he represented was his way of giving sustenance to a kind of critical thinking that he hoped would get us away from the tragedy he felt we were hurtling toward. In a much more minor way, the spirit of my Odysseus is the same.

**BH** It's interesting in this context that you come back to the Greeks in an almost proto-Nietzschean vein. You have this moment where German Hellenism reaches rock bottom in fascism, and I think for a long time, a politicized







relationship to antiquity was necessarily committed to engaging this material in a spirit of critique. And yet, you come back to Adorno's Odysseus as a productive or generative figure. Do you think because we've passed through Adorno's critique there's now space for other forms of encounter with the Greeks? Or are we still haunted by the problem that if you speak to the Greeks you're always defaulting to a form of hegemonic authority, what I've heard you refer to as "seignorial rights"?

PC I think if you believe what you say, if your ambition or purpose is to say something politically or socially relevant, then an element of being persuasive will always rely on how you connect to the idea of seignorial rights. Whom do you speak for? Who authorizes you to say what you say? If you can make that claim effectively, then your other claims become that much stronger and more persuasive. It's an aesthetic element of persuasive speech and perhaps general reasoning that I'm trying to understand and come to terms with as an artist.

Maybe this is the way I can talk about it. I feel like I didn't find the Greeks: the Greeks found me. It just so happened that I ended up in Basel to do this exhibition, and in doing the exhibition I realized, like a true dilettante, that I didn't want to do it, and so I looked for a distraction and found Nietzsche. I don't even like Nietzsche, but I thought it was interesting that he taught at the University of Basel, and he didn't even teach in a philosophy department, he taught philology. I know nothing about philology save from what I learned from a few Greek philosophers I've read or misread, mostly misread, and that's how it began. As I kept reading and thinking about them, they gave me resources for understanding contemporary art in general.

BH What are the resources that the Greeks gave you that contemporary art didn't? It's easy to look at you and wonder why an artist who is so engaged with contemporary politics—I'm thinking of your work with the Iraq War, or after Hurricane Katrina, when you produced *Waiting for Godot* in New Orleans—would go back to antiquity, which seems so far away. Is that a paradox?

PC Like I said at the very beginning, things that don't make sense tend to capture my attention the most. I like a paradox. I need it. It tickles me to no end that I'm reading Parmenides and translating Plato. Why am I translating Plato? But here we are. As for the question of resources, you know, I read somewhere that before Zeus became the god that protects strangers and the homeless, he was simply a typical, vengeful father-god. I think that's

a remarkable thing to remember, especially today, as strangers and the homeless need protecting. It's interesting to think about what happened in Greek society so that the interpretation of Zeus changed. And I think within the world that I find myself in, thinking about the Greeks gives me a different angle. I feel like we need a similar figure today to combat xenophobia and the impulse to kill or maim foreigners. It feels like the Hegelian world spirit is upon us, and it seems regressive. The Greek approach to thinking about Zeus could give us another arrow in the quiver to talk about it.

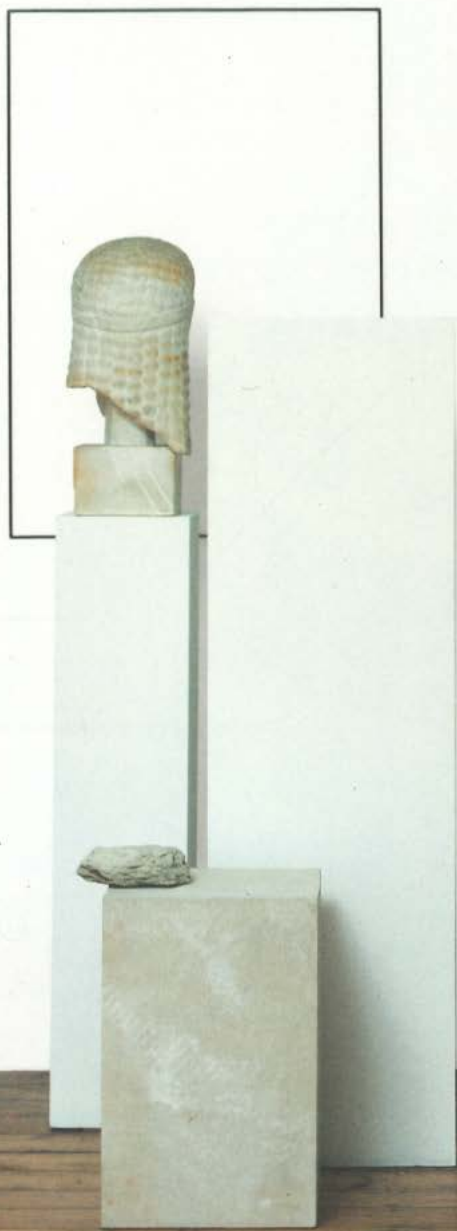
**BROOKE HOLMES [BH]** What motivated your interest in the installation as an artistic medium? Does your interest in antiquity arise out of your museological concerns?

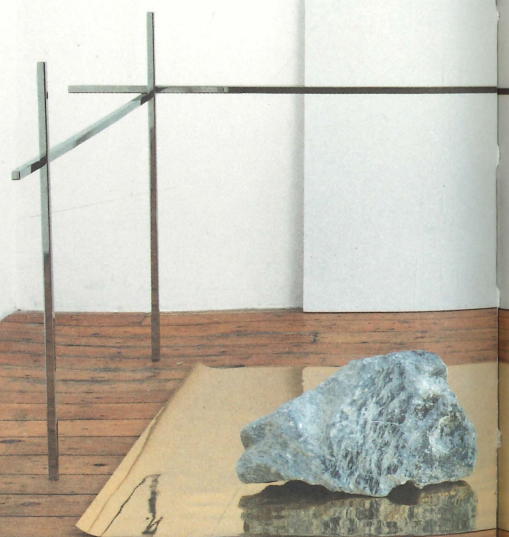
**HARIS EPAMINONDA [HE]** I have been collecting all kinds of objects for as long as I remember. When I travel abroad, I always end up in the same kinds of places: flea markets, antique shops, secondhand bookstores. These objects carry evidence of a heritage, a previous owner, an artisan, a reference to a particular epoch or way of living. During the process of developing an exhibition, I look at colors, light, shapes, and compositions, and I try to think of possible configurations and narratives that could exist within the space. I try to understand how the objects and other elements can be treated as materials, altering the perception we have of the relationships between them and the space they occupy. I like to create hidden corners, passageways, and vantage points, to build a sense of movement and allow some sort of fluidity, whereby one thing leads to the next. Things may seem at times less static or fixed, casually placed here or there, a frame or a vase on the floor leaning on the wall behind a plinth, visible only partially or from specific angles and perspectives. Certain elements may seem to be placed temporarily, as if in a transitory state. This may break rhythm and continuity, add density or loosen things up, create tension and anticipation. For me, this keeps elements vague and open. If I sometimes borrow from the museological language of display, it's in order to perhaps undo the rules and mechanisms that constitute it. It's a physical narrative that consists of materials and the absence of materials and information; a gap filled with emotion.

**BH** How do you see your choices as disrupting canonical display methods?

**HE** I would say I play with these methods rather than disrupting them. A space, a thought, or an emotion may be activated through different gaps and detours. I see the relationship between certain objects and their surroundings as somewhat twofold; there is a sort of interdependency. If an object is placed on, next to, or by a plinth, both are in dialogue with one another, and yet neither seems to continue carrying its presumed attributed properties. Meanwhile, together they tune into a system of connections, relations, and interactions. There is rhythm in all this: elements are choreographed and placed as one places notes in a music score. The elements that occupy a













certain area and the places left empty and bland share equal significance. And each element, whether it belongs to a constellation of things or remains solitary, unfolds as a story, influencing the whole and other individual parts in an interconnected and inseparable way. It is a scattered and fragmentary universe, evolving and expanding in different spaces and from one "volume" to another.

**BH** Could you talk a little more about what you are thinking about when you choose to juxtapose two objects?

**HE** I might select a vase with a shiny black surface because of its reflective properties, or because of its metaphorical qualities as a container, or even as a mere punctuation in a space. The viewer is invited to look and build his or her own story about the object, whatever that may be. It is an intuitive personal reading of an object, and thus of history. The installations are both a complete abstraction of form, color, and material, and a space comprised of objects, each with its own individual narrative. In juxtaposing objects, I am always driven by intuition, and by questions of how and why an object belongs with another or not, and how each element can connect to its surroundings. There are, of course, obvious relations—this can come through in color, shape, texture, size, or origin, or the position of objects—but there are also less obvious ones, whereby relationships are built through associations. The relations they exist within can involve other nearby objects or images, an architectural detail that has been emphasized or altered, or an object exhibited in a previous show. They can also involve a reference to a film, a moment in time, or a place remembered. The Japanese use the word *ma* to refer to, among other things, space as interval, or a consciousness of place. It is used both to describe the interval between two or more spatial or temporal things existing in continuity, and as a way of seeing, of considering the significance of placement and space, and the impact it has on the subject's experience of objects.

**BH** Are you particularly committed to a logic of cross-cultural comparison? What about the encounter between objects from very different historical periods?

**HE** If you mean in my practice, then no, not at all. Rather the opposite. I collect objects from all eras and cultures, as well as things found in the natural world, not in order to compare them to each other but to put them in dialogue. I'm interested in the fact that every object has an origin and an unknown destination. A pot from South America might look very similar to one from Asia, and it might even have been produced during roughly the same

period, yet another pot from another time and other place might look almost identical. It's like a thought that appears in different places at different times. I do not impose a hierarchy on the object and its support structure, in the same way I do not wish to classify an object according to its value or origin.

**BH** How do you understand the relationship between artmaking and curation?

**HE** There are artists who use gestures and methods of curation in their work. And there are curators who work as freely as artists do. As an artist, you know you're on the right track when you may not be fully aware of what you're doing or where you are going, and somehow, by returning to it over and over, you understand both a little more and a little less. As a curator, perhaps, it is more likely that you are expected to give directions that can legitimate your thoughts and actions.

**BH** You have worked with both film and books. Do you use them differently in the narratives you construct?

**HE** I don't really distinguish much between mediums, since my methodology is more or less always the same. My process is quite impulsive and intuitive. In film I see sculptural qualities, and likewise I am attuned to the filmic characteristics of the environments I build.

**BH** Let's talk about your "Projects 96" show at the Museum of Modern Art in New York in 2011, which included prints from magazines, objects, and films. What motivated your choices of the show's different components?

**HE** I was thinking about the space itself, and how to interrupt it and build up a rhythm. Abstract drawings slowly became more precise and developed into an architectural floor plan, defining walls, rooms, corridors and thresholds. Parallel to this I selected a large group of objects from my archive: framed found pages, vases, sculptural findings, and so on. In the end, I needed to find a way to bring together objects and their interactions within the space. In all of my exhibitions, I bring a lot of material to work with, some of which may not be used in the end.

**BH** You recently participated in a roundtable on the "archaeological turn" in contemporary Cypriot art. Is archaeology an influence on your practice?

**HE** Yes, very much so. Over the years I have adopted a rather phenomenological stance toward archaeology and the things from the past that I collect.

An object is as much a primary material for study and speculation as it is a metaphor, a sign, a word, a color, a form, a brushstroke.

**BH** What are you working on at the moment?





**HE** I am currently developing a project in collaboration with Point Centre for Contemporary Art in Nicosia, with whom I previously collaborated on *Chapters* [2013], a four-hour-long 16-mm film shot in Cyprus. In the new project, an imaginary “museum” will reveal itself over time out of physical fragments that I will design and present in exhibitions. As the museum continues to evolve and expand, new rooms, floors, corridors, paths, gardens, and so on will be added to it. Consisting of multiple architectural elements, interior details, exhibition furniture, artifacts, archives, and a library, it will also take an online form as an index in which one can navigate layers of information that parallel the physical manifestations and expand on them in different directions. Even though it is unlikely that a physical space will ever be built to embody the project’s form and content, I hope that one day all these elements will come together under the same roof, and perhaps provide a glimpse of the work’s multifaceted character and ever-changing form. However, it may be precisely this unfinished and unresolved state of the project that will keep it open; different shards and fragments will be presented here and there, in the hope that a space will be opened for imagination, an image of what could become. And yet, the story of what develops inside and outside the “museum” remains to be written—and rewritten again and again.

### III.I. EFFACEMENT

*by Glenn W. Most*

Effacement is the most extreme form of defacement. The defacement of an object, the act of disfiguring it beyond the inevitability of natural attrition, out of duty, protest, resentment, or sheer ferocious joy, can leave it mutilated but still, if not intact, at least present. If this destruction is carried to its ultimate end, however, it can efface and thereby annihilate the object, leaving no trace of the original at all or, at most, a barely noticeable vestige of its passing.

We might define a classical tradition as one in which certain objects that are deemed especially worthy of sustained scholarly and public attention hover ambiguously between defacement and effacement. Most of the texts and artifacts that the classical tradition reveres have become mere fragments over time, and even when, in a very few cases, a text or object has survived integrally, without having been broken into more or less incoherent pieces, it has still been defaced by the very processes that have permitted its survival and transmitted it to posterity. In the case of texts, these processes include manuscript transmission and dissemination, which multiply copies at the cost of introducing variants. Other artifacts, after being covered up by earth or water or else exposed to the elements, can be recycled, restored,

and revised, or excavated, looted, and placed in museums. Yet even when artifacts seem unviolated, or texts appear free of errors and lacunae, they still arrive at later ages deprived of the contexts within which they had once been situated, the conditions that had enabled them to be created and enjoyed, and the uses and meanings within those contexts that future classical scholars, for all their efforts, will never be able fully to recover. All classical scholarship is devoted to trying, in various ways, to reduce and if possible to remedy the many effects of defacement, and all classical scholars are haunted by an anxiety about the immeasurably larger number of objects that have been lost once and for all to effacement. The ubiquity of defacement invariably raises the specter of effacement: we know that all that survives from that past has been damaged, but how can we even guess at how much has been lost without leaving any trace at all?

The effects of concealment and exposure can do significant damage over time, as can even the most reverent human care. But the products of most classical traditions have also been exposed to periods of concerted, intentional disfigurement for the sake of politics, theology, economics, or fun.





Parchment manuscripts were expensive to make: hundreds of sheepskins might be needed to produce a single volume. When a medieval monastery found itself in possession of a dusty old codex by some heathen author and was in need of a bright new manuscript by a Christian one, it would often create a palimpsest, laboriously abrading and washing out the old writing and inscribing a new text over it. To the naked eye, the older writing might appear to have been effaced, yet various chemical and, later, optical techniques have been devised in the past two centuries allowing these original texts to be rescued for scholars more interested in pagan authors than in Christian ones (the first chemical attempts to restore the lost texts ended up damaging them forever). Similarly, when a Roman emperor or other high-ranking official fell out of favor, his honorific statues, coins, and monuments could be consigned to *damnatio memoriae*: either the object in question was destroyed or, if it remained in use, the disgraced man's name and image were defaced or effaced entirely. Sometimes identifying marks were replaced with those of another man, and a statue might be resculpted to bear another person's features. In the Byzantine East, an iconoclastic movement reacted, often violently, against the widespread use of Christian iconography to transmit salvational messages, and instead

sought to restore theological correctness (and no doubt maintain the monopoly of educated elites) by mutilating or destroying sacred images.

More or less parallel phenomena can easily be found in other traditions throughout the world. But in one regard, the role this history plays in the Western cultural tradition is especially troubling. Both *defacement* and *effacement* contain the word *face* within them, and etymologically they both refer to something that happens to the human countenance: either something is removed from (*de-*) a face, or that face is removed (*ef-*) altogether—we might say that both terms deface their origins without effacing them altogether. The Greek and Roman cultures were notoriously fascinated by the human body, and above all by the human face: their sculptures often represented gods or humans as nude, highly individualized and yet ideal specimens of the greatest degree of physical beauty to which men and women could aspire. These are the faces that many of us in the West think of when we reflect on our classical tradition. A collection of Greek and Roman sculptures is inevitably a collection of unforgettable faces, from the archaic kouros with his mysterious smile, to the statue of the classical athlete poised in gracefully dynamic tension, to the Roman Republican portrait, with its furrows and warts and anxieties, to the Roman Imperial commemorative monu-

ments, imposing in their recognizability. Even the oscillation between defacement and effacement that involves not faces but texts—for example, in some Cy Twombly paintings, which resemble unfinished palimpsests—can produce a sense of uncanniness and anxiety in the viewer. But the faces that once belonged to the Greek and Roman past affect us with a particular pathos. For among those that have survived, and which attempt in vain to meet our gaze, every single one has been defaced by the ravages of time or the vandalism of man. And all the others have been effaced forever.

### III.II. CAPITAL

by Page duBois

The current of the stream of gold and silver is a double one. On the one hand, it spreads itself from its sources over all the markets of the world, in order to become absorbed, to various extents, into the different national spheres of circulation, to fill the conduits of currency, to replace abraded gold and silver coins, to supply the material of articles of luxury, and to petrify into hoards. This first current is started by the countries that exchange their labor, realized in commodities, for the labor embodied in the precious metals by gold- and silver-producing countries. On the other hand, there is a continual flowing backwards and forwards of gold and silver between the different national spheres of circulation, a current whose motion depends on the ceaseless fluctuations in the course of exchange.—Karl Marx

Silver embodies the liquidity, the fluidity, the mutability of capital. Found as ore in the ground, when heated it turns into a molten flow that can be captured in solid form, then melted down again and again, surviving through time.

Three moments:

The worker in silver, someone who could take that solid and re-form it, was like a god, a magician, someone who

could form a world. In Homer, Achilles' mother, Thetis, was called "silver-footed" (*argyropous*) since as a Nereid, daughter of a sea god, she arrived on land in the silvery, crashing surf to beg the smith god Hephaistos to replace the armor taken from the corpse of Achilles' beloved comrade, Patroklos.

Into the fire he now cast solid bronze  
and tin,

silver and precious gold. . . .

First he fashioned a shield, both huge  
and sturdy, adorned

intricately all over, and around it set a  
bright rim,

three-layered and glinting, complete  
with silver baldric. . . .

On it he also fashioned a vineyard, lush  
with clusters,

fine and golden; black the bunched  
grapes, while the vines

were propped up throughout on silver  
poles.

In the funeral games held to mourn the dead Patroklos, Achilles set out prizes that included another sort of precious object made from silver:

Peleus' son now set out other prizes, for  
speed of foot:

a finely worked silver mixing bowl, of





six measures only,  
yet for beauty it far exceeded every  
last one on earth,  
having been cunningly fashioned  
by Sidonian craftsmen.  
Phoenician merchants ferried it over  
the misty deep  
and brought it to harbor, and made  
a present of it to Thoas;  
and as ransom for Priam's son  
Lykaon it was surrendered  
by Euneos, the son of Jason, to the  
hero Patroklos.  
This bowl Achilles set out, in honor  
of his comrade,  
for whoever might prove the  
speediest in the footrace.

This account, a genealogy of a precious object carried from Phoenicia, passed from hand to hand, as gift, ransom, and prize, exemplifies silver's capacity for movement across the sea.

The classical Athenians turned their silver into coins. They learned the practice of coining precious metals from Greek or Asian neighbors, and in Attica they used coinage formed of metal found in the mines of Laureion. These coins, marked with the owl of Athena, became the standard for circulation and exchange. When the treasury of the Delian League, organized to protect the Greeks against a possible future return of the Persians, was shifted to Athens, it fell under

the authority of the goddess Athena. Herodotus writes:

The method adopted by the Persian kings of storing their treasure is to melt the metal and pour it into earthenware jars; the jar is then chipped off leaving the solid metal. When the money is wanted, the necessary amount is coined for the occasion.

The Athenians stored tributes in cast lumps in the shape of statuettes of Athena Nike. The silver was brought onstage at the City Dionysia. A decree concerning coinage, weights, and measures was issued to all cities of the Athenian empire, mandating that those in the empire were required to use Athenian coins, and that the minting of coins was not allowed among subjects and allies. Athenian silver coins continued to circulate in the Eastern Mediterranean: Near Eastern and Egyptian coin hoards contain great quantities of these images of Athena, indicating the wealth and authority of her city. Although the handling and exchange of these coins may seem banal and quotidian, in fact the politics of coinage were significant in the classical age, and the presence of Athenian divinity in every transaction served as a reminder of the city's reach and hegemonic intentions.

In the Christian New Testament, the apostle Paul traveled to Ephesus to

encourage the followers of Jesus there,  
and to preach to possible converts.

A man named Demetrius, a silversmith who made silver shrines to Artemis, brought no little business to the artisans. . . . He said: "In almost the whole of Asia this Paul has persuaded and drawn away a considerable number of people by saying that gods made with hands are not gods. And there is danger not only that this trade of ours may come into disrepute but also that the temple of the great goddess Artemis will be scorned, and she will be deprived of her majesty that brought all Asia and the world to worship her." When they heard this, they were enraged and shouted, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!" . . . For about two hours all of them shouted in unison, "Great is Artemis of the Ephesians!"

These precious objects, transformed in liquidity from ore to molten metal to object, fashioned by gods, artisans, workers, and slaves, become the priceless hoards, ruins, and remains of antiquity that were hidden underground, excavated and sold, commodified and resold, displayed in museums, and reclaimed by other museums, all by the custodians who had acquired these treasures from the tomb robbers and the ancient silver dealers who employed them.



### III.III. M A R M O R E A L

*by Simon Goldhill*

Museums are where things go to die. Untimely ripped from the places where they lived; where they were touched, used, worked; where they made meanings; here they lie, identified with bare labels. Not to be touched, now. We walk, hushed and reverent as mourners at a funeral, pause, and stare, conscious of irreversible loss.

We love to put the things of death in this place, too. Here is the splendor of Tutankhamen, his mask from the grave; here is the body from the bogs; "Et in Arcadia ego," the tomb's reminder.

Once the famous image of Achilles and Ajax, hunched over a table, playing dice, was handled by men at a party, reminding them, as they drank and laughed, of the passed age of heroes and the death march of war. Achilles, the greatest of the Greeks, makes a wager with death: he is offered immortal glory in exchange for dying young. What is worth giving up a life for? Ajax, the second greatest of the Greeks, becomes the Trojan War's most famous suicide, after being humiliated and dishonored by his comrades. What is worth giving up your own life for? Here, before the battle that is always about to come, Achilles and Ajax sit, a moment of stillness in the turmoil and rush of fighting—a pause, held, in movement. During a party,

this image is turned and touched, and the wine flows and the men, soldiers all, drink. In the museum, we stare at its stillness. And move on.

We are given permission to stare in the gallery and museum. But not at each other, staring. With each other, we glance and sidle and imagine other lives, other encounters, the flow of a life. Here, though, we can stare at bodies, at perfect white memorialized flesh.

There is a stela where a girl's head in profile leans down with earnest, sad focus, away from our eyes and toward the doves in her hands, the fluttering, breathing birds stilled; even their eyes. One dove now has lost its face, but it still looks back at the girl; the other has its beak almost at her lips in mute shared attention. Her pose is at rest but with one leg bent forward, her skin and gentle fleshiness appearing through her robes. It is as if she is about to move on. This too is a memorial of death, a gravestone for a girl. The body in relief is passing in and out of the stone, not quite fully rounded, fully there, with air on all sides. The birds, like the spirit of the girl, are stilled, held from flying into the air. The step she is about to take, the movement about to erupt, will never happen. The solid stone embodies transition and speaks of loss.

IN THE HOSPITALITY  
OF WAR  
WE LEFT THEM THEIR DEAD  
AS A GIFT  
TO REMEMBER  
US  
AND TO CHASE





This stone has also been taken from its grave, a grave left unmarked, and brought to a museum in another land to be looked at as an example of a style of memorial, and wondered at for its classical beauty, its graveness. A gravestone without a grave, without a body, without a name. What death is contemplated here? We stare, hold the moment, and pass on.

We can walk around the statue of the Aphrodite of Cnidus. Wherever we stand, the goddess of desire, unlike Degas' Olympia, does not look back at us, and we can gaze at her naked body. She stands in a gesture of surprise—she knows she is being looked at—concealing or revealing her breasts and genitals with her hands, barely, as her clothes fall, grabbed at. Socrates says that to look at a beautiful woman is to long to touch, and that to move on is to be pained by the itch of unsatisfied desire. But what would it be to touch the stone of this imagined flesh? To perform the desire to feel, to test the warmth and softness of this hard, cold body; to admit Aphrodite's power and her realm? We can walk with bare feet on marble floors, or sit and feel a marble seat, but gazing at a marble body we become aware of a different contrast between our own fleshliness and the stilled, too-solid form. The idealization of classical form is also a recognition of the limits of our own embodiment.

Such statues were once painted in colors. We now need them white. The whiteness of the marble is the sign of the classical. No shifting, breathing gradations of a body in time; no touching. Thus marble becomes the marmoreal—monumental, pure, idealized, formalized, distanced. We move in our own time around the still statue, never able to catch its eye as it stares away from us. In this encounter, we know ourselves—our bodies, our time—to be other than this colorless perfected immobility; but in the museum, amid the dead things, the things of death, we shore such monuments as art against the death that awaits, that pale stillness.

Such is the materiality of classicism, its marmoreality.

Cy Twombly, dead now, knew.

His white box *Epitaph* (Jupiter Island, 1992) is a reliquary teeming with the dead, which it cannot shut in. It is inscribed with the sharp-edged words of a long-dead Greek poet, Archilochus:

In the Hospitality

Of War

We left them their dead

As a gift

To remember us by.

White on white, a gift of classicism designed to stop the passerby with its fertile invocation of the past, Twombly's ironic, modernist box of the dead takes



its place in a line of white, marmoreal forms, classicism's unending memorial.

What, then, is our desire when we place our bodies for a time before the classical form with its perfected, idealized whiteness, before the pale stillness of death?

To make art is to turn such desire into form. Art wakes with a marble head in its hands. To place ourselves in time, we speak of the dead: addressing the still, cold silence of the marmoreal makes us speak out the necessary, daily fleshliness of our lives.

—Kidron Valley, spring 2016

### III.IV. DIALOGUE

by Joy Connolly

Who am I when I enter into dialogue with another? When my interlocutor, thinking with me, speaks and in the flow of speaking changes my thinking, I sense permeability, even liquidity, in the boundary between self and other. This is intersubjectivity made palpable; in that moment I glimpse the indeterminate futurity of my self.

To Hannah Arendt, who observed that words are “something like a frozen thought that thinking must unfreeze,” the act of thinking-with is the dialogic flow that unfreezes concepts, renewing their meanings and making them usable for life in the company of others. She remarks admiringly on Socrates’ assertion in the *Apology* that he can’t give up his habit of examining his concepts and beliefs with other men—suggesting that, like her, he believes dialogue to be necessary for thinking and judging. In Arendt’s deep preoccupation with Socrates, we see that his habit exemplifies what she views as a dynamic flow between antiquity and the present. It is this dialogic relation that must be maintained in order to keep alive the remembrance of the past that grounds our will to preserve human life.

The artist Tino Sehgal creates “constructed situations,” many of which involve dialogue between

museum or gallery visitors and people he calls “interpreters,” who have been trained by Sehgal and his staff. His titles—*This is Right*, *This is Now*, *This Situation*, *This Progress*—pose deictic puzzles. The first interpreter a visitor would meet in *This Progress*, which was mounted in the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York in 2010, would ask the visitor, exactly as Socrates might have asked a passerby on an Athenian street, “What is progress?” If the visitor answered, the interpreter, a young child, would listen to her definition of progress and draw her along the Guggenheim’s first ramp before introducing her to a waiting teenager and repeating the answer. Once the child left, the conversation would continue in this Socratic style, with the teenager probing the definition as the pair walked. After a few minutes, an interpreter aged between twenty-five and fifty would take over the dialogue, with interpreter and visitor walking and talking until they reached the top of the museum, where an older person would close the piece.

While across town, Marina Abramović was using her retrospective at the Museum of Modern Art to compel visitors to sit and stare at her in silence, Sehgal was instructing his interpreters to coax their partners to







the most conversationally interesting place they could possibly reach. *This Progress* replaced the shuffle-and-stare that visitors do in museums with an intersubjective experience, one designed to trigger perceptions and thoughts that would subvert the museum's dominant aesthetic regime, in which a temporarily immobile human eye gazes at permanently immobile and discursively stabilized art. With the interpreter, the visitor *became* the artwork—or *made* the artwork. The power of the piece rested in its blurring of being and making via new human relations, the serial sense of “we” created by the visitor and her interpreters on their walks.

Plato's dialogues showcase more than talk. Keenly attentive to sensory and intersubjective experiences, Plato shows Socrates and his interlocutors laughing, hiccupping, and making one another frustrated or lustful. His theatricalized representation of their behavior heightens readers' attention to how we experience ourselves in the world in the presence of others, and particularly at moments when we seek to understand the world. Similarly, *This Progress* at its best demonstrated how walking and interacting with a hitherto unknown person on the ramps of the Guggenheim could be a distinctively, passionately generative experience. The sensation of novel creativity, of ideas being birthed through conversation,

rested on each participant's visual and physical awareness of the other. At the same time, the piece was not a private feedback loop: certain rules of engagement and the process of meeting and walking with increasingly older interpreters defamiliarized the encounter, tugging the interlocutors' attention forward and outward. As the piece started and restarted, it invoked the same experience one has when reading Plato: this is happening now, this is happening again, this is happening for the first time, again. During these encounters we ask: What is progress? What is friendship? What is justice? What is love?

Such dialogue requires intensive, ongoing care. And as Arendt's deep engagement with Plato and other writers suggests, this careful dialogue may occur with a text as well as with a person. Keeping the potential of dialogue very much in mind, Arendt interacts with the texts that interest her, quoting, querying, rephrasing, rejecting. (Similarly, Machiavelli famously remarked that when he reached home at night after a long day, he liked to sit and talk with his friends: his favorite Greek and Latin authors.) Thinking with and about an ancient text, Arendt claims, is a path every human must “ploddingly pave” anew, and for this reason she implicitly encourages us to reject the passivity of the term *reception*, which we have grown accustomed to applying to our work with classical texts.

Both Arendt's translation of Socratic texts into a distinctively dialogic style of argument and Sehgal's *This Progress*, with its evocations of Socrates, are models for thinking through readerly relations; how classical texts can exist as things we think *about* and produce ideas *from* while also thinking-*with*. These works prompt us to concentrate on the thinking that can emerge out of the reader's encounter with them—on the activity and the products of thinking not just about the text, but with and beyond the text, in the world. The felt presence of the interpreter in *This Progress* also reminds us that thinking-with is impossible to do in the absence of the other. In that work, the presence of the other was sometimes frustrating, sometimes exciting, but always urgently *there*. So, too, for Arendt, is the presence of the classical text both urgent and felt. It stands as the pillar of remembrance in the historical moment of modernity, which prefers to forget, to destroy, and to yield to the seductive fiction of total novelty rather than to cultivate memory and reinvent the new.

### III.V. DOCUMENTUM

by Lucia Allais

"A man-made object demanding to be experienced aesthetically"—this is how the German art historian Erwin Panofsky defined a work of art in a 1938 lecture. The question Panofsky was answering was not, in fact, "What is art?" but "What is the meaning of the humanities?" Panofsky therefore extended this demanding power from artworks proper to other things, including those produced by science, scholarship, and industry. The object of humanistic scholarship became, in Panofsky's analysis, "the monument." Panofsky recognized that the humanities were more traditionally understood as an "investigation of human 'record'"—that is, as an inquiry into documents. But rather than make a strict division between monuments and documents, he proposed that the humanities were the realm where "everyone's 'monuments' are everyone else's 'documents.'" It was the ability to strike a delicate balance between apprehending a work firsthand and studying it for meaning that constituted for Panofsky the true mark of a scholar. Before getting to work, the humanist needed first to engage in an act of re-creation, to "mentally re-create the creations" that were his object of study. In the very act of being interpreted, then, every artifact from the past would sustain this oscillation and become what I propose to call a *documonument*.

Panofsky's theory has become a landmark in the history of modern scholarship, but it also arguably describes the way in which antiquity's monuments are experienced today. Take the Parthenon. In the 1920s and '30s, the Parthenon was reconstituted through anastylosis. In ancient Greek, this term refers to the erection of a temple. Its modern return with the meaning of "reerection" was native to the Athenian Acropolis, where the Greek architect Nikolaos Balanos was appointed by an international committee to produce extensive reconstructions in 1895.

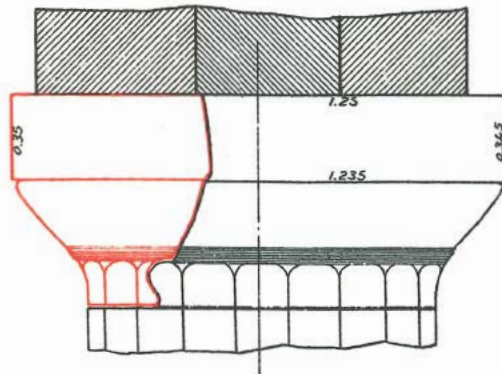
Anastylosis confirmed modernity's obsession with material authenticity and originality in architectural preservation. Balanos defined the practice as "the reinstatement of authentic pieces from the monument which have been found on the ground." But even Balanos has retrospectively come under attack for his cavalier attitude toward ancient fragments. By using new metal ties, which corroded the stone around ancient slots, and cutting away at old fragments to fit them against new ones, like puzzle pieces, he seemed to violate the documentary impulse that he invoked in the monument's reconstruction.



ΣΥΜΠΛΗΡΩΣΙΣ ΤΟΥ ΚΙΟΝΟΚΡΑΝΟΥ  
ΤΟΥ ΥΠ' ΑΡ' 22'-Χ' ΚΙΟΝΟΣ ΤΗΣ ΑΝΑΤ. ΠΡΟΫΦΕΩΣ  
RESTAURATION D'UNE PARTIE DU CHAPITEAU DE LA  
22'-X' COLONNE DE LA FAÇADE EST

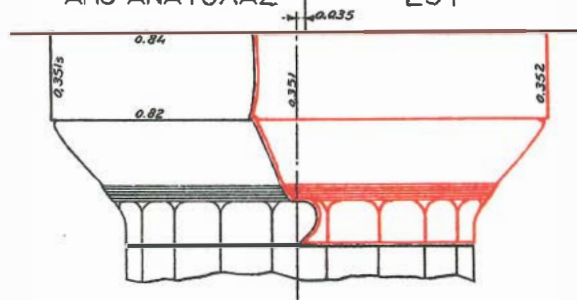
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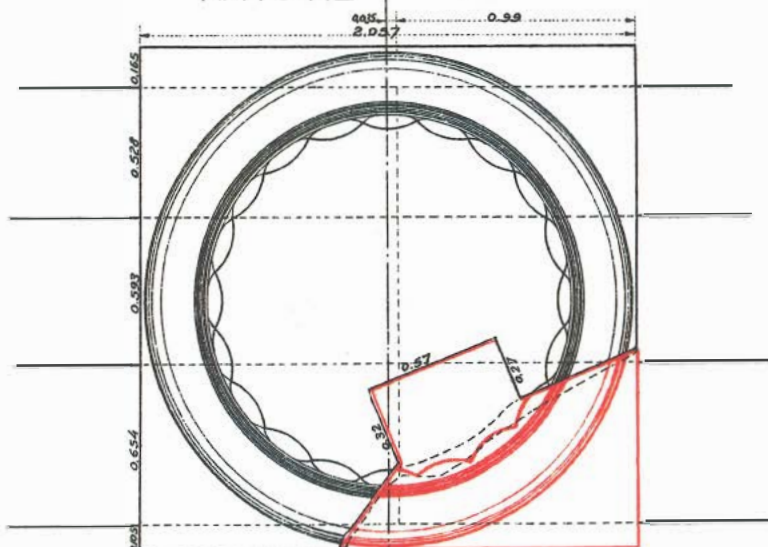
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VUE DU COTE  
EST



ΚΑΤΟΫΨΙΣ

PLAN



Σχ. 3  
Fig. 3

N. ΜΠΑΛΑΝΟΣ

But if instead we define anastylosis, as others did during Balanos' time, as "the use of new pieces to hold up ancient pieces," then it becomes an act of doubling the monument. The reconstructed object demands to be experienced in two ways—as a primary source, a thing from the past; and also as a document, a thing that points to the past. Anastylosis, then, is not a "restoration" but a way in which buildings ask for the recognition of modernity, especially in their creation out of fragments.

In the case of the Parthenon, defragmentation took on three aspects. First, according to the standard procedure for anastylosis, scattered column drums were gathered from the site, and pieces that could not be found were replicated with visibly modern materials. Second, the northern and southern facades were treated differently. The technical alibi was that there were enough pieces from the north colonnade to allow for its complete reconstruction, whereas there were not enough on the south side, so that colonnade had to be rebuilt as a ruin. Conceptually, this was presented as a splitting of the monumental image into two: the north side would reflect an idealized, timeless image of the object, and the south would reflect a more recent past. In the words of one commentator, "There [would] thus remain on the one side a memory of the Parthenon as the world has

known it for two hundred years and on the other the longer memory."

Finally, through the color and texture choices of the new pieces, the gestalt oscillation between new and old was choreographed for the visitor approaching the Acropolis on the long walk up the hill. From afar, visitors would see a complete object, but from close up they would read the Parthenon more carefully as a fragmented assemblage. More than a static object, the monument performed its aesthetic demands by positioning viewers in space. Thinking about the Parthenon as a documoment suddenly renders important all the paperwork produced in its reconstruction, effectively authorizing us to "experience" these documents aesthetically. Balanos published a folio of beautifully intricate drawings, with red and black ink distinguishing old and new, respectively. These drawings are pervaded by an aesthetics of collage: seams must be visible, colors have to show, and the flatness of an architectural cut must be juxtaposed with the depth of a hand-rendered volume. But Balanos famously completed these drawings *after* he had finished the project.

Looking in the archive, we find many other graphic documents produced during the reconstitution. There is a drawing by the archaeologist William Bell Dinsmoor, who visualized an alternative rearrangement of the column

drums with a web of dotted lines, in a virtual reconstitution of the Greeks' ancient facade from Balanos' modern one. There is also a hand-drawn sketch of the American donors who paid for the columns of the northern colonnade, each depicted laboriously lifting the column he paid for. In these records we find the Parthenon surrounded not only by scholars and archaeologists but also by "everyone" else, which at the time meant the who's who of Europe's learned elites, including Henry James and Winston Churchill, who both visited Balanos' construction site and sent letters (or drawings) home.

If we take seriously Panofsky's idea that "everyone's monument is everyone else's document," who is "everyone" today? Documonuments are all around us. They seduce us into endless debates, switching us in and out of two modes as if architectural knowledge of the past were only available in two options. They contain our experiences and constrain our intellection. Even when the oscillation approaches a critical breaking point, the familiar stability of the architectural object comes to the rescue—in inevitable calls for permanence, or monumentality. The Acropolis today is as much a construction site as it was in Balanos' time, but in these acts of construction its buildings are still conceived as objects, not as projects. The materialist turn urges us to imagine that

architecture "demands" certain aesthetic experiences from us. We would do well to remember that its most monumental objects have often been designed to *reduce* the cognitive, experiential, and even political positions they make available to us.



### III.VI. FILM

by Rebekah Rutkoff

Where shall I get my money now . . . ?

—Fyodor Dostoyevsky, quoted by Gregory Markopoulos

Film is prone to deterioration, to liquid crises of various kinds. It is subject to hydrolysis, the dissolution of chemical bonds by water. The word itself tells us this by way of ancient Greek: *hydōr* (water) + *lysē* (from *lyein*, “to loosen, to break up”). Even when not projected onto a screen, film offers dramatic spectacles of states of change. On the road to its final state as brown dust, nitrate-based film blisters, releasing a honey-like substance that eventually binds an entire roll into an undifferentiated mass. Fluid-filled bubbles form in the gelatin of acetate-base film as plasticizers evaporate; ultimately, the film buckles and flakes.

Film faced a different kind of liquidity dilemma when the digital tidal wave hit the shore in the mid-1990s. Eastman Kodak, dominator of the photographic film market since 1888, itself began to buckle, and the company filed for bankruptcy in 2012. Over the past decade, sales of motion picture film have declined more than 90 percent. This tactile medium, which demands space for projection and patience for its latent images to be processed, seems to be in the process

of a long and inevitable fade-out. The use of film in the early twenty-first century can look like the contemporary study of antiquity: breathtaking when handled by a few old masters, but otherwise quaint, irrelevant, politically out of step.

“The motion picture has its origin in the frieze of the Parthenon and in the movement of the chorus in Greek tragedy,” the late American filmmaker Gregory Markopoulos declared, forgoing the zoetrope for an alliance with antiquity. But this partnership was forged to some extent out of grief: “These thoughts are born as the Parthenon disappears, betrayed,” he wrote in 1976. Since 2004, these two fading stars—film and antiquity—have met under real ones in the Arcadian sky. Every four years, spectators gather in a field near Lyssaraia, the filmmaker’s ancestral village in the Peloponnese, for an event called the Temenos (ancient Greek for “a place set apart”). Markopoulos created his final film, the silent, eighty-hour *Eniaios* (1947–91) (meaning both “unity” and “uniqueness”), to be viewed exclusively at the Temenos.





A self-professed “filmmaker-physician,” Markopoulos aligned himself with Asclepius, the hero turned god of healing in whose sanctuaries ailing pilgrims went to “incubate”—to produce curative dreams. Markopoulos had hoped his flashing, frame-length images might induce a therapeutic form of “visual incubation.” His bold intentions can stimulate an irresistible desire to snuff out the last flickers of so many outdated forms—celluloid, religion, male authority, reverence for antiquity—all at once. But above the din of obsolescence narratives, the Temenos persists. Unprinted when Markopoulos died, and too far afield of the art market to stimulate a swift act of preservation (each of its twenty-two cycles costs \$25,000 to restore), *Eniaios* is in the midst of a slow-motion and high-risk birth. The filmmaker Robert Beavers, Markopoulos’ longtime partner, oversees its labor-intensive restoration; a devoted group of young volunteers repairs each broken splice. Dependent on a discontinued Kodak internegative stock, the film’s final cycles will screen in 2030 if restoration continues at the current rate. Film and antiquity appear as partners in a race against time: will Prometheus make it to the finish line before the right chemicals dry up?

“Where can I get a DVD?” I am frequently asked about the films of Beavers and Markopoulos, genuine curiosity

turning into critique and demand at once. The filmmakers famously left the US in 1968 and removed their films from distribution. But that refusal is a fifty-year-old story with its own contexts: cultural, economic, and psychic. The wish to wrench these films into the twenty-first century misses the unfolding of their present-tense actualities.

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While the ancient wellsprings of Markopoulos’ films are sharply announced, Beavers’ deep absorption of antiquity does not show up directly but in poetic aftereffects and structural impact. Classicism has already undergone hydrolysis in Beavers’ hands; to engage with his films is to meet it unbound.

In 2015, I visited the Athenian sites of *Efpsychi* (1983/1996) and *The Stoas* (1991–97) with Beavers. Inspired by ancient vessels, the latter was originally titled *Stoas and Vases*. The vases eventually disappeared, but they resurfaced in images of two cupped hands and studies of empty industrial arcades, which also echo the colonnades that led to the ancient Lyceum. Creating a vaselike “shape of emptiness,” these arcades ultimately give way to the rushing Lousios river in Arcadia. Beavers shot *Efpsychi* and *The Stoas* in the then-quiet commercial district surrounding the Central Market, where



streets—Aristophanous, Sofokleous, Aeschylou, Euripidou—are named after classical authors. He was fascinated by the coexistence of the elevated and the ordinary: “the pedestrian level, the business of the street, and above it the classical authors, the mask,” he wrote.

A young actor in *Efpsychi* repeatedly utters “*teleftea*,” meaning “the last (one).” It’s a vendor’s phrase, but during filming, Beavers discovered another valence: “I noticed the ancient Greek word *teleftan*—death.” Today there are fewer artisanal laborers and more money-transfer shops along the streets where Beavers filmed. Stoa Ikarou houses a refugee center, and across from the still-operating candle-making shop that appears in *Efpsychi*, STOA ARISTOPHANOUS remains inscribed in stone—though now over a vacant lot. Days after my walk with Beavers, I returned to this area, following Sofokleous Street out of the market district as it gives way to a stretch of gold-gated banks. It was the first day they were open after weeks of capital controls. Under the entryway of Commercial Bank, I asked the guard if the bank was truly open. He was less focused on the apparent restoration of liquidity than on larger concerns. “We have reached the limits of capitalism,” he announced, before quoting Lenin and Plato.

### III.VII. MYTHMAKING

by Richard Fletcher

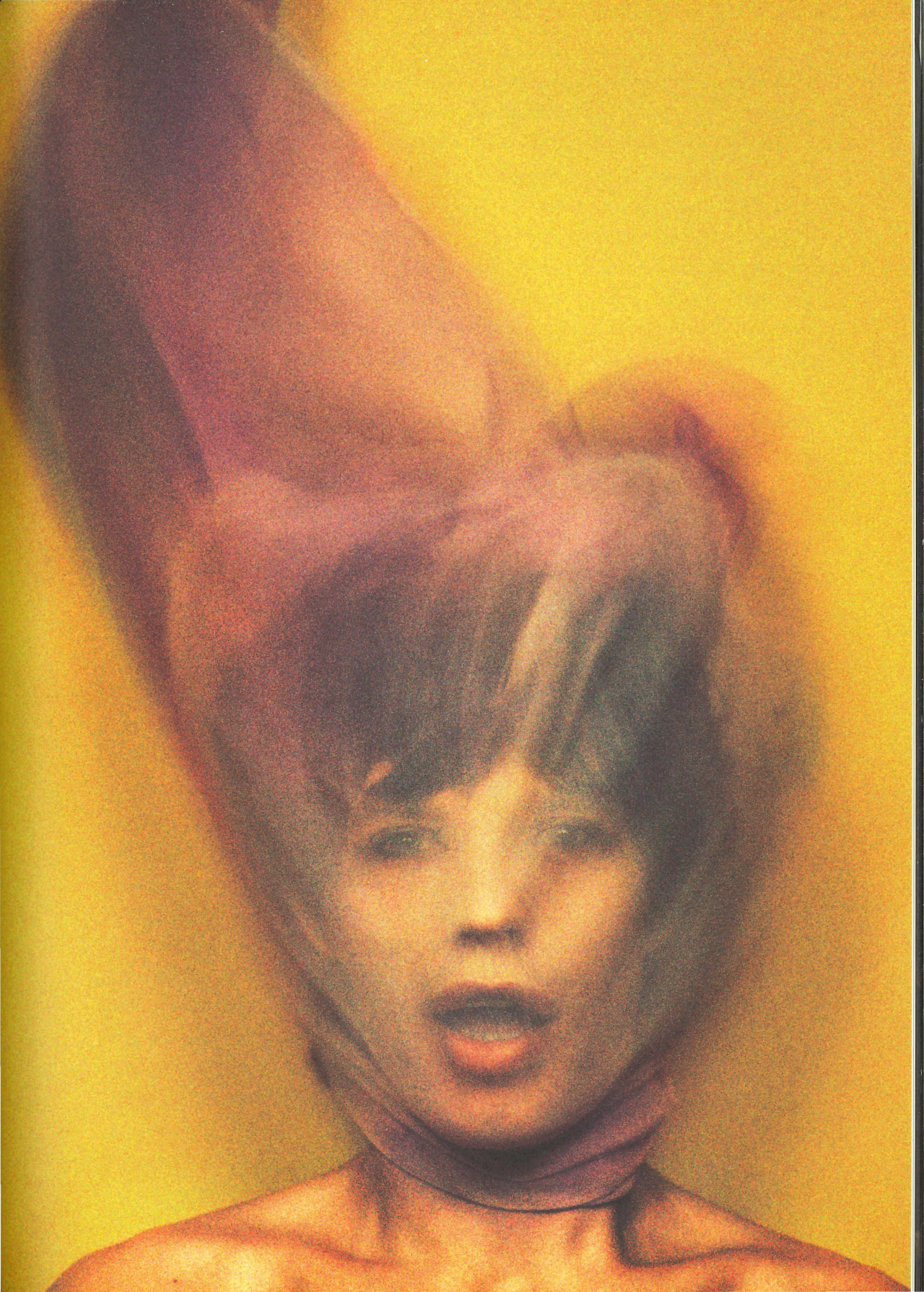
One of the ways in which the cultures of ancient Greece and Rome are still very much alive for us today is through their enduring myths. The myth of Actaeon, for example, never changes. From Ovid to Titian to Pierre Klossowski, the unmannerly intruder continues to wander through the forest, destined to stumble upon the bathing goddess Artemis/Diana, to be turned into a stag, hunted down, and killed by his own dogs. Since antiquity, mythic narratives have been told and retold through the literary and visual arts. At the same time, there has also been a parallel project at work, one that rejects the easy remake and attempts to *make* myths, often in a way that challenges their very status as such. Plato was the first to try this, and he staked out the technique virtually single-handedly, inserting his own myths into his dialogues, and grafting them onto philosophical arguments and concepts. He made Socrates "mythologize" the soul's immortality, and had Timaeus tell a "likely myth" (*eikōs muthos*) about the gods and the origins of the universe. To paraphrase Duchamp's statement about works of art, Plato was implicitly posing the question "Can one make stories which are not 'of myth'?" Or, put another way, is it possible to make myths that can

elude reification by existing as stories that are intrinsically malleable and easily circulated?

Not surprisingly, the history of Platonic mythmaking is one of false starts and paths that petered out, of projects that dissipated or were absorbed (e.g., how Plato's tale of Er's journey to the afterlife is diluted into a dream for Cicero's Scipio). Paradoxically, the bold expansion of myth after Plato rendered the manufactured myth increasingly vulnerable. While Actaeon renews himself in poems and paintings, Er becomes more or less illegible when not framed within the myth of Odysseus, and in its Roman allegorizing reception.

What would it mean to step out of this carefully structured system? Suppose an author's Platonic mythmaking consisted of releasing a myth directly into a system that depended on reproduction and distribution, a model that encouraged contamination, borrowing, stealing, and horizontal blur? In antiquity, such a model was the direct extension of Platonic mythmaking, particularly the mode of narrative fiction created by the *philosophus Platonicus* Apuleius of Madauros. The Cupid and Psyche myth at the heart of his *Metamorphoses* marks itself, like Cicero's Scipio, as mythmaking in the Platonic vein, and it, too, suffers







the attendant failures of allegory. Yet not so Apuleius' overarching fictional narrative about a man turned into a donkey, which is intended to present an alternative interpretation of the Actaeon myth. When gazing on the atrium depicting the Actaeon myth, Apuleius' pre-asinine protagonist Lucius is told, "All you see is yours." This gesture turns Lucius into Actaeon in a way that differs from the myth's retellings in Ovid, Titian, and Klossowski; its radicality stems in part from the fact that it is a direct expression of a process of production. Like no other myth, that of Actaeon the stag snugly fits within a series of well-worn donkey stories, which work as generators of fiction in antiquity, from the lost work of Lucius of Patrae to Lucian's *Onos* to Apuleius' own "Greekish tale."

This connection between myth and fiction points to a shortcoming of Platonic mythmaking. As allegory, Platonic mythmaking emphasizes its universal availability and underlines its freedom from the framing conventions that govern traditional myth production and reception. Even so, it can be perceived as the most esoteric and elitist mythic mode. Furthermore, Platonic mythmaking contains an impulse to situate a story's creation at a singular point in space and time, which turns the myth, a priori, into a monument (e.g., the myth of Er, the Cupid and Psyche myth, and so on). But what if a story is

instead disseminated and reproduced, its value declining as its accessibility rises, as was the case with Apuleius' Lucius-as-Actaeon? A problem emerges when the constellation of critique, publicity, and discussion around mythmaking is at least as charged as the primary experience of the myth itself. Does one have an obligation to encounter the myth being made firsthand, as with Cicero's Scipionic dream? What happens when a more intimate, thoughtful, and enduring understanding comes from mediated representations of mythmaking, rather than from the direct experience of a myth being made?

A good example of the distinction between mediation and the direct experience of mythmaking is in how Apuleius briefly and subtly returns to the Actaeon myth after its appearance in a sculpture in Book Two. When a dog steals some stag meat meant for Lucius' master in Book Eight, the cook's wife suggests killing Lucius the ass and using his meat as a replacement. This differs from the parallel scene in Lucian's Greek tale, the *Onos*, wherein wild ass meat is stolen; and also from the *Life of Aesop*, in which a slave replaces a pig's leg that his own master has stolen as a pretext for beating him. Apuleius makes the stag-shift as a way of inserting the Actaeon myth into his asinine slave-narrative, seemingly as a mundane detail. But this is no playful allusion; rather, it is the author's way of

signaling the brute potential of his own brand of mythmaking. This example is also provocative, as the story's deplorable content (ass meat) is clearly bound up with the original myth's extraordinary routes of transmission and reception. Apuleius transforms Plato's rarified mythmaking into a moralizing tale about society's displacement of violence from bodies (those of slaves) into the realm of images (the myth of Actaeon), all through the shifting figure of his ass-man protagonist Lucius.

The history of classicism indicates that it's impossible to destroy or dematerialize a myth. Like it or not, myths can only expand, and voraciously synthesize every aspect of life. On the other hand, we can take up Apuleius' Actaeon as an example of a unique model of mythmaking that offers the redemptive circulation of allegory through design. Production, after all, is the excretory phase in the process of appropriation. Armed with Apuleius' model of mythmaking, it may be that we classicists are standing at the beginning of something different.

*Actaeon drifted through a thick and obscure world, observant but incapable of action. It took him a while to understand that he wasn't dreaming, but while moving through the real world and actual life, only it was no longer his life, because his body and all of its doings were no longer under his control.*

### III.VIII. CONSTELLATION

by Joshua Billings

A constellation is an idea, a way of grouping singularities into a virtual whole. The whole does not exist as an independent object, but as something posited, an interpretation. The stars in a constellation are separated by millions of light-years; they have no meaningful physical relation to one another. When we trace a constellation, we establish a relationship that does not correspond to any concrete connections. Moreover, the constellation is of a different order from its parts: unlike the sum of two numbers or the midpoint between locations, a constellation transforms its elements into something other, turns stars in the sky into points in an image. There is something troublingly arbitrary about a constellation. One could just as well trace different lines in the sky and come up with a different image. A constellation is pure serendipity.

Yet at the same time, constellations are reliable. We can count on them to orient us in space and time. The Watchman at the beginning of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* knows "the assembly of the night stars, bringing winter and summer to mortals, brilliant dynasts, shining in the sky, when they set and their risings." As he lies on top of the palace in Argos, waiting for a sign of the end of the Trojan War,

the motions of constellations provide him with a measure of the years going by. Even more, they seem to direct the seasons, the "dynasts" who guide the natural cycle and bring good and ill. While human fortune is profoundly uncertain, the arrangement of the stars is dependable, as is their course through the sky. Constellations serve as guides for navigating the seas and seasons, giving us direction amid the fluid expanses of space and time.

Constellations lend themselves to causal thinking. How did they come to be? A litany of myths offer answers. What do constellations make happen? Astrological charts tell us. Mythology and astrology, not coincidentally, are forms of explanation and prediction that modern scientific thought programmatically—and problematically—has "left behind." It is easy to forget that once they were considered hard science. Constellations are an embarrassing reminder that, until quite recently, the heavens were thought to have an intimate causal relationship with human life. Now we know the stars don't care.

Constellation-thinking rationalizes randomness, gives depth to superficial alignments. The accidental quality of constellations, perhaps, is what makes them so ripe for etiology and prognostication.







They demand interpretation—but interpretation of a particular kind. The myths that account for constellations are almost inevitably violent ones: Callisto is pursued by Zeus and transformed by Hera into a bear; the hunter Orion is killed by his patron goddess, Artemis, for his arrogance, then turned into a constellation; Andromeda is frozen in the sky, bound to a rock. A place among the stars serves as consolation for victims of senseless brutality.

Walter Benjamin is the theorist of constellations and the violence that often underlies them. "Ideas are to things as constellations are to stars. That is to say: they are neither their concepts nor their laws." Constellations are posterior to their component stars; the stars, like the objects of our phenomenal world, have an independent and mysterious existence, which we do not truly grasp through interpreting their arrangements. This act of interpretation, Benjamin writes, is "objective," not in that it is necessarily true (one could interpret arrangements differently) but in that it is demonstrably *there*. We simply have to point.

"Ideas are eternal constellations," Benjamin writes, "and in that the elements are grasped as points in such constellations, the phenomena are distributed and saved at once." But what are they saved from? From rape by the gods, from jealous murder, from

eternal confinement—from becoming a cautionary tale. In a constellation, individuality is erased without being obliterated; that which used to have its own name and character comes to be seen as a part of a larger whole. The salvation of phenomena—like the salvation of mythological figures—comes about through metamorphosis. The constellation is the figure of metamorphosis in its necessity and its arbitrariness.

Even as it saves, metamorphosis is always violent. Benjamin distinguishes between mythic violence and divine violence. Both are unpredictable, but mythic violence creates the possibility of interpretation; it is law-giving, where divine violence is law-destroying. "Mythic violence in its archetypal form is simple manifestation of the gods. Not means to their ends, hardly manifestation of their will, but primarily manifestation of their existence." As pure manifestation of the divine, mythic violence comes from nowhere but establishes enduring presence.

Constellations are an aspect of this presence, remnants of mythic violence. The very senselessness of mythic violence establishes the possibility of making sense. Without warning, the gods make themselves known. We cannot recognize a logic to their manifestations, except that *the gods are*. In simply being, though, they make our world interpretable. The fact of their existence establishes the coordinates of our own, as we reason downward from

the heavens. Constellations, as interpretations of mythic violence, remind us of the senselessness that frames our attempts to make sense of things.

Our efforts to make sense of the ancient past must rely on constellation-thinking. What remains of the ancient texts, objects, events, and beliefs is too fragmentary, too unsystematic, too diffuse to permit reconstruction. We pick out the scattered dots of these remains and draw lines between them. We hope the lines represent something that once was, though they may not—and we wouldn't know if they did. Still, there is nothing arbitrary about the images we make. They are invested with our sense of ourselves as beings who exist in time, who come into the world late and leave it early. We try to make an image from a few points, believing we have redeemed the ruins of millennia. And we have, though it is not the ancient past we have redeemed. It is the present.

Today, our knowledge of the stars takes different forms: we name them individually, estimate their distance from us and from one another, predict their locations to the millisecond. We can look ever deeper into the night sky and discover more and stranger forms. Finding images in the stars, like explaining the world around us by the acts of the gods, or predicting the future from animal entrails, is no longer seen as knowledge. But constellation-thinking

persists as a way of making meaning that programmatically places the observer—us—at the center of things. The stars make images; they bear the marks of their origins among us and foretell our future. The gods are *there*. And so they are.



### III.IX. THE SUBLIME

by James I. Porter

When we think of the sublime, what comes to mind? The ineffable. The event. The instant. The unrepresentable. The unrepresentable. Pure presence. Pure absence. The mystery of being. The mystery of not-being.

Behind this array of ideas—this sheer confusion and embarrassment of language—one thing seems constant: sublimity itself, that ephemeral quality that can be grasped only in the now of the moment, as though it had no history, no pedigree, no future, no origin outside itself. Always withdrawing from view and rendering our language, our thought, and our sensations a little belated, the sublime is the erasure of all time and all history.

And yet the sublime *does* have a history. Sublimity was and still is an effect of an encounter with the confines that are inherent in any framing and picturing of the world—an unsettling prospect, to be sure. At such moments what one encounters is less a thing than the conditions of its possibility. Because each age frames its world differently, the experience of the sublime varies from era to era even as the fundamental fact of limiting conditions remains constant. As such, dallying at the boundaries of the familiar and with the hazards of capturing experience itself is the least

original gesture imaginable, but also the source of the most multifarious experiences there are.

The welter of sensations and descriptions we use to index the sublime are like twice-breathed air: they are a testament to the liquidity of the concept and to its storied background. Couched in a language and in a structure of affect that we have learned, the sublime is an inheritance that presents itself as though it were not one. The sublime is never just now—it is always a “then” reinscribed as an evanescent and blindingly self-evident “now.” It is part of a tradition that is forever trying to erase itself through the idea and experience of an electrifying present, be this in the classicizing imagination of modernity—in which the worship of the “then” is transacted in a fantasy of a recaptured “now”—or in the postmodern imagination, for which sublimity is a way of idealizing the present as a quintessentially *unclassical* experience. In the latter, the worship of “now” replaces the worship of the “then” in a fantasized rupture with the past. In either view, the past, imagined as immediately available or as hopelessly irrelevant, serves as a limit-condition of the present—its sublime other.





Modernity and postmodernity learned to "speak" the language of the sublime from a tradition that passed through an array of texts and objects that reach back to a time before Homer and forward into Byzantium. Learned, but then forgot that they had done so. Somewhere along the way, antiquity itself became sublime: it became "classical" and canonical, a fetish and an object of veneration. How can we disenchant this prospect of a sublime and classical antiquity? One way, paradoxically, is to acknowledge that what counted as sublime in antiquity does not necessarily count as sublime for us, or at least not in the same fashion. To appreciate this fact is to appreciate the sublimity of antiquity in its alienated otherness.

In antiquity, the sublime manifests itself in different and incomparable forms. There is a vaulting, proud, and hyperbolic sublimity (Homer is the model here); a sublimity that seeks refuge from this world in otherworldly vistas (Platonism and Neoplatonism); a sublimity tied to ideas of posterity, fame, or an everlasting afterlife (Homer, Thucydides, Longinus); and a sublimity that revels in the exhilarating profusion and sheer vitality of the material world and of life itself in all its contingent and ephemeral particularity (Empedocles, Democritus, Lucretius, the Roman Stoics). Sublimity can be born of struggle or anxiety, of desire or repulsion, of

nature or of art, or it can merely happen and be. Above all, the sublime is never a fixed entity, in part because it lives in relations rather than in objects. Sublimity is found in exhilarating heights, but also in profound or terrifying depths, in excessive presences or in gaping absences, in the chaos of spears clashing in deadly warfare or in the chaos of burgeoning life. Ultimately, though, sublimity inhabits none of these extremes per se, because it resides in the tension that subsists between them, in a gap or distance, which is to say in the abyss that stretches between the visible and the invisible. The sublime cannot be seen. It is that into which one must *plunge*.

More a stumbling block than an object of thought, the sublime involves quandaries of scale, measure, and value. It is found less in the large or the small than in the collision of these two dimensions. Longinus finds the "crushing together" of two tiny word-particles in Homer—*hypo* + *ek*, fused into the "unnatural" compound *hypek* ("out-from-under")—mind-shatteringly sublime. Sublimity clusters as often around matter (the hard and unyielding, the brute force of feeling felt or rejected, the mere sonic quality of a letter or a word) as it does around the immaterial (the numinous, the transcendent, and the divine). In point of fact, neither experience exists in the other's absence: they come about wherever matter and the immaterial

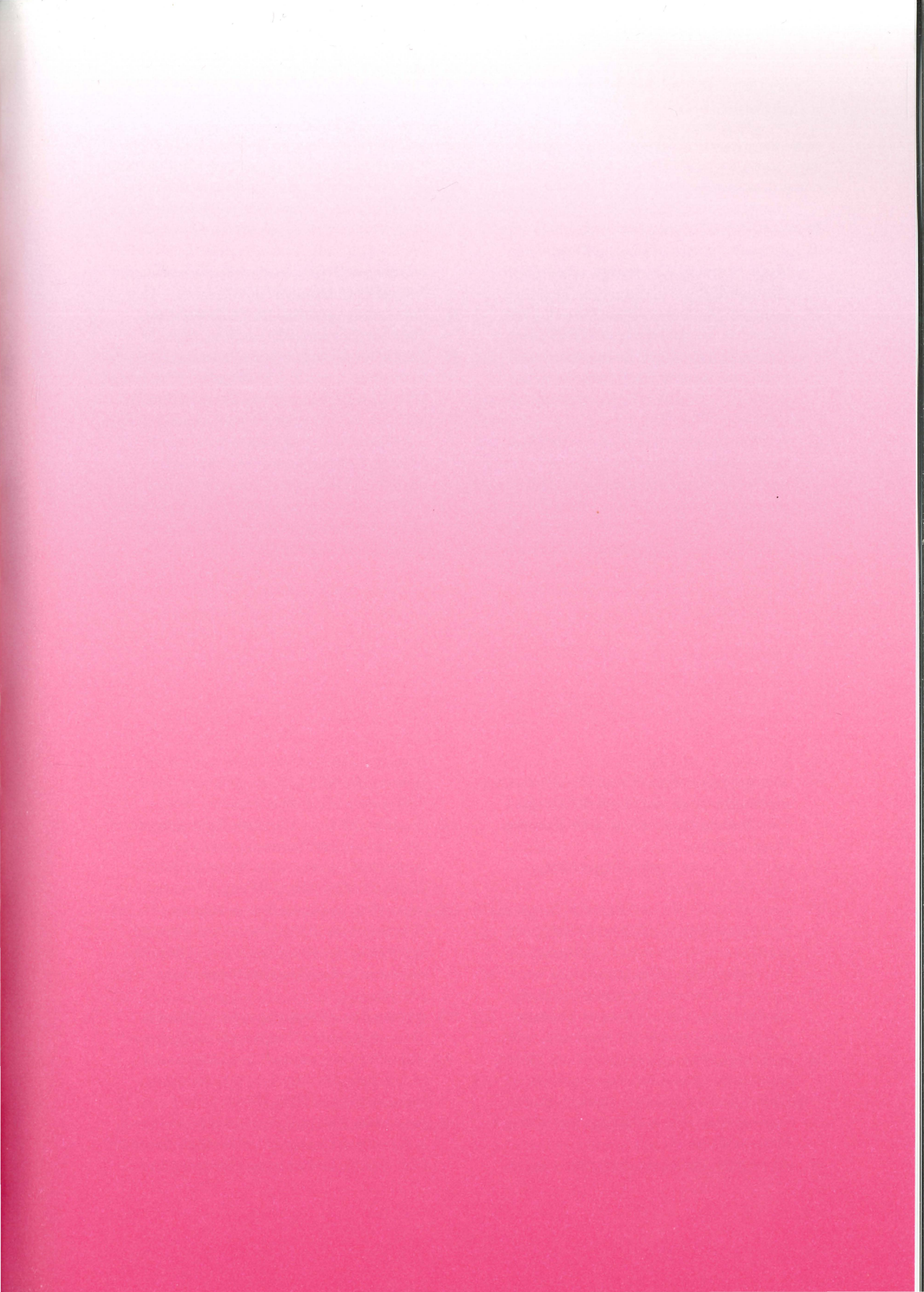


converge, threatening the purity of their distinction, and then of all distinctions. Atoms are gaps in the void: they are silhouettes of the unseen. Sublimity blinds when it illuminates. It is the irruption of light into the world at a time before the world. *Fiat lux* has this power for Longinus, for Philo, and for Augustine. J. M. W. Turner, in his memorialization of Genesis in *Light and Colour (Goethe's Theory)—the Morning after the Deluge—Moses Writing the Book of Genesis* (1843), but no doubt of Longinus too, shaped the divine light into a blinding halo of thick yellow impasto that obscures what it illuminates. Art is sublime wherever it lays bare—and then appears, for a moment, to obliterate—its very conditions of possibility. And the same holds for any product of thought, imagination, or experience: for when are these never a source of scandal to themselves?

Plainly, sublimity in antiquity is no one thing. In its utter unpredictability, in its lack of coherence and unity, and in its disobedience of every norm, the sublime continually undoes our preconceptions of the past—and, by extension, those of our contemporary present as well. If antiquity can be made liquid again and made to tremble in its chaotic flow, so too can the present-day, once it is rejoined to the long, turbulent, and typically hidden pathways that connect then and now.









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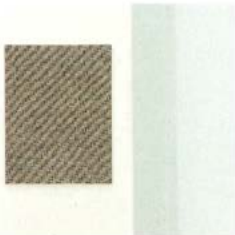


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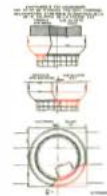
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# CONTRIBUTORS' BIOGRAPHIES

## ARTISTS

**Matthew Barney** is an artist based in New York. His film *River of Fundament* (2014) debuted at the Brooklyn Academy of Music and was screened worldwide, including at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, where it was featured in a 2015 solo exhibition. His five-film "Cremaster" cycle (1994-2002) was the subject of an internationally touring exhibition organized by the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York. In 2009, Barney and Elizabeth Peyton performed a site-specific work titled *Blood of Two* for the opening of the DESTE Project Space Slaughterhouse on the Greek island of Hydra.

**Paul Chan** is an artist based in New York. His exhibition "Hippias Minor," inspired by Plato's text, debuted at the DESTE Project Space Slaughterhouse, in Hydra, Greece, in 2015 and was accompanied by a new translation copublished by Badlands Unlimited and DESTE. He was the winner of the Hugo Boss Prize in 2014.

**Haris Epaminonda** is an artist from Cyprus based in Berlin. Her first solo show in the US took place in 2011 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York. Other solo exhibitions include those at Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo, Seville; Le Plateau, Paris; Fondazione Querini Stampalia, Venice; Point Centre for Contemporary Art, Nicosia; Modern Art Oxford, UK; Kunsthaus Zürich; Schirn Kunsthalle, Frankfurt; Tate Modern, London; Site Gallery, Sheffield, UK; Malmö Konsthall, Sweden. In 2007 Epaminonda co-represented Cyprus at the 52nd Venice Biennale, and in 2012 she took part in Documenta 13 in Kassel.

**Urs Fischer** is a Swiss artist based in New York. In 2011, he attracted international attention after debuting a wax sculpture in the form of Giambologna's sculpture *The Rape of the Sabine Women* as part of the work *Untitled* (2011) at the 54th Venice Biennale. Two years later, his work was the subject of a retrospective at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and a show, "YES," at the DESTE Project Space Slaughterhouse in Hydra. Prior to that, he also designed the exhibition "Fractured Figure" (2008) at the DESTE Foundation in Athens.

**Jeff Koons** is an artist based in New York City. Works from his *Antiquity* series, which he began in 2008, were featured in his major 2014/2015 exhibition organized by the Whitney Museum of American Art, *Jeff Koons: A Retrospective*, which traveled to the Centre Pompidou Paris and the Guggenheim Bilbao. Working in the tradition of the readymade while exploring art historical themes, Koons in his work seeks to open paths to self-acceptance and transcendence.

**Christodoulos Panayiotou** is a Cypriot artist who lives in Cyprus and France. He was the winner of the 2005 DESTE Prize, and his work has been the subject of solo exhibitions at various institutions, including the Moderna Museet in Stockholm, and Kunsthalle Zürich. In 2015, he was the featured artist for the Cyprus Pavilion of the 56th Venice Biennale, and in 2012 he participated in Documenta 13 in Kassel.

**Asad Raza** is a New York-based writer, artist, and producer. In 2014, Raza and Tino Sehgal collaborated on an exhibition at the Roman Agora in Athens. In 2015, Raza created an exhibition relating to Pan for Frieze Projects, London.

**Charles Ray** is an artist based in Los Angeles. In 1998, a midcareer retrospective of his work opened at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles; the show traveled to the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago and the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York. In 2014, his work was the subject of a career retrospective at the Kunstmuseum Basel, which traveled to the Art Institute of Chicago in 2015.

**Kaari Upson** is an artist based in Los Angeles. Since 2007 she has been working on *The Larry Project*, parts of which were shown in 2008 at the Hammer Museum in Los Angeles. Her work is held in the collections of the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles, and the Museum of Contemporary Art in Boston.

## AUTHORS

**Adrián Villar Rojas** is an Argentine artist. In 2011, he represented Argentina at the 54th Venice Biennale, where he was awarded the Benesse Prize. He has been featured in solo shows at the Moderna Museet, Stockholm (2015), the Museum Haus Konstruktiv in Zurich (2013), and the Serpentine Sackler Gallery in London (2013). His work *Motherland* (2015) will be activated at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in New York every year in perpetuity.

**Lucia Allais** is an architectural historian and theorist whose work addresses the relations of architecture, preservation, politics, and technology in the modern period, with a special focus on international institutions and global practices. She is assistant professor of the history and theory of architecture at Princeton University and an editor of *Grey Room*.

**Emanuela Bianchi** is assistant professor of comparative literature with affiliations in the Department of Classics and Program in Gender and Sexuality Studies at New York University. She has also authored a book-length feminist study of Aristotle's cosmology, and has published numerous articles on sex and gender in ancient metaphysics. Her interests encompass a genealogical approach to matter and bodies, psychoanalysis, poststructuralism, queer theory, and feminism.

**Joshua Billings** is assistant professor of classics at Princeton University. His research focuses on ancient Greek literature, philosophy, and modern intellectual history, with a particular concentration on tragedy.

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